LIFE'S MINOR COLLISIONS

FRANCES AND
GERTRUDE WARNER

Sketches of family life written with the same zest, piquancy and humor which made Frances Warner's "Endicott and I" so popular.

CONTENTS

To Horse — Boston Streets — Trio Impetuoso — The Will to Boss — Carving at Table — The Return of A, B, C — Love's Minor Frictions — The Feeling of Irritation — Understanding the Healthy — More to it than You'd Think — Wheels and how they go Round

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LIFE'S MINOR COLLISIONS

WARNER

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LIFE'S MINOR COLLISIONS

BY

FRANCES AND GERTRUDE WARNER

AUTHORS (RESPECTIVELY) OF "ENDICOTT AND I"
AND "HOUSE OF DELIGHT"

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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TO OUR GRANDMOTHER

MARCIA JANE CHANDLER CARPENTER

WHO NEVER COLLIDES

WHY MINOR?

COLLISIONS are measured by what they will smash. Potentially, all collisions are major. A slight blow will explode a bomb. But since most of us do not commonly carry dynamite through the busy sections of this life, we can take a good many brisk knocks and still survive.

The collisions, though dealt with in separate chapters by two of us, are seldom between two people alone. They are collisions, mostly minor, between the individual and the group, the individual and circumstances, the individual and the horse he rides on.

All the chapters are for those kindred spirits who try to be easy to live with — and find it difficult.

F. L. W.
G. C. W.

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NOTE

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LIFE'S MINOR COLLISIONS

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LOVE'S MINOR FRICTIONS

INOR friction is the kind that produces the most showy results with the smallest outlay. You can stir up more electricity in a cat by stroking her fur the wrong way than you can by dropping her into the well. You can ruffle the dearest member of your family more by asking him twice if he is *sure* that he locked the back door than his political opponents could stir him with a libel. We have direct access to the state of mind of the

people with whom we share household life and love. Therefore, in most homes, no matter how congenial, a certain amount of minor friction is inevitable.

Four typical causes of minor friction are questions of *tempo*, the brotherly reform measure, supervised telephone conversations, and tenure of parental control. These are standard group-irritants that sometimes vex the sweetest natures.

The matter of *tempo*, broadly considered, covers the whole process of adjustment between people of hasty and deliberate moods. It involves alertness of spiritual response, alacrity in taking hints and filling orders, timely appreciations, considerate delays, and all the other delicate retards and accelerations that are necessary if hearts are to beat

as one. But it also includes such homely questions as the time for setting out for places, the time consumed in getting ready to set out, and the swiftness of our progress thither. When a man who is tardy is unequally yoked with a wife who is prompt, their family moves from point to point with an irregularity of rhythm that lends suspense to the mildest occasions.

A certain architect and his wife Sue are a case in point. Sue is always on time. If she is going to drive at four, she has her children ready at half-past three, and she stations them in the front hall, with muscles flexed, at ten minutes to four, so that the whole group may emerge from the door like food shot from guns, and meet the incoming automobile accurately at the

curb. Nobody ever stops his engine for Sue. Her husband is correspondingly late. Just after they were married, the choir at their church gambled quietly on the chances — whether she would get him to church on time, or whether he would make her late. The first Sunday they came five minutes early, the second ten minutes late, and every Sunday after that, Sue came early, Prescott came late, and the choir put their money into the contribution-box. In fact, a family of this kind can solve its problem most neatly by running on independent schedules, except when they are to ride in the same automobile or on the same train. Then, there is likely to be a breeze.

But the great test of such a family's grasp of the time-element comes when

they have a guest who must catch a given car, due to pass the white post at the corner at a quarter to the hour. The visit is drawing to a close, with five minutes to spare before car-time. Those members of the family who like to wait until the last moment, and take their chances of boarding the running-board on the run, continue a lively conversation with the guest. But the prompt ones, with furtive eye straying to the clock, begin to sit forward uneasily in their chairs, their faces drawn, pulse feverish, pondering the question whether it is better to let a guest miss a car or seem to hurry him away. The situation is all the harder for the prompt contingent, because usually they have behind them a criminal record of occasions when they have urged guests to the curb

in plenty of time and the car turned out to be late. The runners and jumpers of the family had said it would be late, and it was late. These memories restrain speech until the latest possible moment. Then the guest is whisked out to the white post with the words, "If you *could* stay, we'd be delighted, but if you really *have* to make your train —" Every punctual person knows the look of patronage with which the leisured classes of his family listen to this old speech of his. They find something nervous and petty about his prancing and pawing, quite inferior to their large oblivion. As Tagore would say, "They are not too poor to be late."

The matter of *tempo* involves also the sense of the fortunate moment, and the timing of deeds to accord with moods.

In almost every group there is one member who is set at a slightly different velocity from the others, with a momentum not easily checked. When the rest of the household settles down to pleasant conversation, this member thinks of something pressing that must be done at once.

The mother of three college boys is being slowly trained out of this habit. Her sons say that she ought to have been a fire-chief, so brisk is she when in her typical hook-and-ladder mood. Whenever her family sits talking in the evening, she has flitting memories of things that she must run and do. One night, when she had suddenly rushed out to see if the maid had remembered to put out the milk tickets, one of the boys was dispatched with a warrant for

her arrest. He traced her to the door of the side porch, and peered out at her in the darkness. "What 's little pussy-foot doing now?" he inquired affectionately. "Can she see better in the dark? Come along back." But her blood was up. She thought of several other duties still waiting, and went at once to the kitchen and filled the dipper. With this she returned to the room where sat the waiting conversationalists, and systematically watered the fern. It was like wearing orange to a Sinn Fein rally. At the chorus of reproach she only laughed, the scornful laugh of the villain on the stage. Six determined hands seized her at once. The boys explained that, when they wanted to talk to her, it was no time to water ferns. As habitual breaker-up of pub-

lic meetings, she was going to be reformed.

But the reform measure, a group-irritant second to none, is generally uphill business in the home. Welfare work among equals is sometimes imperative, but seldom popular. Any programme of social improvement implies agitation and a powerful leverage of public opinion not wholly tranquillizing to the person to be reformed.

There is one family that has worked for years upon the case of one of its members who reads aloud out of season. When this brother William finds a noble bit of literature, he is fired to share it with his relatives, regardless of time and circumstances. He comes eagerly out of his study, book in hand, when his public is trying on a dress.

Or he begins to read without warning, when all the other people in the room are reading something else. Arguments and penalties never had the slightest effect, until one of the company hit upon a device that proves a defensive measure in emergencies.

Brother William started suddenly to read aloud from a campaign speech. His youngest sister was absorbed in that passage in "Edwin Drood" called "A Night With Durdles," where Jasper and Durdles are climbing the cathedral spire. In self-defence she also began to read in a clear tone as follows: "Anon, they turn into narrower and steeper staircases, and the night air begins to blow upon them, and the chirp of some startled jackdaw or frightened rook precedes the heavy beating of wings in

a confined space, and the beating down of dust and straws upon their heads."

The idea spread like wildfire. All the others opened their books and magazines and joined her in reading aloud from the page where they had been interrupted. It was a deafening medley of incongruous material — a very telling demonstration of the distance from which their minds had jumped when recalled to the campaign speech. Brother William was able to distinguish in the uproar such fragments as these: "Just at that moment I discovered four Spad machines far below the enemy planes"; "'Thankyou thankyou,' cried Mr. Salteena —"; "Thomas Chatterton Jupiter Zeus, a most dear woodrat"; and "'It is natural,' Gavin said slowly, 'that you, sir, should wonder

why I am here with this woman at such an hour.'"

This method did not work a permanent cure, because nothing ever cures the reader-aloud. His impulse is generosity — a mainspring of character, not a passing whim. But at a crisis, his audience can read aloud in concert.

The reform measure is more hopeful when directed, not at a rooted trait, but at a surface phase or custom. Even here success is not without its battles. My sister Barbara and I were once bent upon teaching our younger brother Geoffrey to rise when ladies entered the room. Geoffrey, then at the brigand age, looked at this custom as the mannerism of an effete civilization. He rose, indeed, for guests, but not as to the manner born. One day he came

home and reported that the lady next door had introduced him to an aunt of hers who had just arrived on a visit. "And," said he, with speculative eye upon his sisters, "*I did n't get up to be introduced.*"

The effect was all that heart could wish. Tongues flew. Geoffrey listened with mournful dignity, offering no excuse. He waited until our sisterly vocabulary was exhausted.

"Why did n't you ask me where I was when she introduced me?" he asked at length. "I was crawling along the ridgepole of her garage catching her cat for her, and I could n't get up."

But we were not easily diverted from our attempts to foster in him the manly graces. We even went so far as to invite Geoffrey to afternoon tea-

parties with our friends. But a Tea-Lion, he said, was one thing that he was not. On such occasions he would be found sitting on the kitchen table dourly eating up the olives and refusing to come in. We were too young in those days to know that you cannot hurry a certain phase. But now, when we meet our brother at receptions, we smile at our former despair. Reformers often find their hardest tasks taken out of their hands by time.

Few brothers and sisters, however, are willing to trust to time to work its wonders. There is a sense of fraternal responsibility that goads us to do what we can for each other in a small way. The friction that ensues constitutes an experience of human values that the hermit in his cell can never know.

Whenever people of decided views feel personally responsible for each other's acts, a type of social unrest begins to brew that sometimes leads to progress and sometimes leads to riots.

For this reason, in any home that aspires to peace at any price, the telephone should be installed in a sound-proof box-office with no glass in the door. There is nothing that so incenses a friendly nature as a family grouped in the middle-distance offering advice when a telephone conversation is going on. The person at the receiver looks so idle; there seems to be no reason why he should not listen with his unoccupied ear; and, when he is so evidently in need of correct data, it seems only kind to help him out. It is the most natural thing in the world to listen. The family

listens, in the first place, to find out which one of them is wanted, and they continue to listen to find out what is said. When the wrong thing is said, all loyal relatives feel responsible.

The person telephoning is unfairly handicapped by necessary politeness, because he can be heard through the transmitter and his advisers cannot. Only extreme exasperation can unleash his tongue, as happened once when Geoffrey, in our father's absence, undertook to answer a telephone call while Barbara, in the next room, corrected his mistakes.

Geoffrey, pricking both ears, was doing very well, until the lady at the other end of the line asked a question at the exact moment when Barbara offered a new thought. "What did you

say?" inquired Geoffrey. Both Barbara and the lady repeated. "What is it?" said Geoffrey, waving one foot at Barbara. Barbara, not seeing the foot, repeated, and so did the lady, this time more distinctly. "I beg your pardon," said Geoffrey anxiously, "but what did you say?" Like an incredible nightmare the thing happened again. "Shut up!" roared Geoffrey; "what did you say?"

Barbara, recognizing instantly that part of the message directed to her, wrote her suggestion on the telephone pad and stole prudently away. Minor friction, she had learned, can sometimes lead to action on a large scale. Only after some such experience as this do we allow a kinsman to conduct his own telephone conversations, taking his own respon-

sibilities, running his own dark risks.

But the sense of mutual responsibility is, after all, the prime educational factor in family life. Every good parent has a feeling of accountability for the acts of his children. He may believe in self-determination for the small States about him, but after all he holds a mandate. The delightful interweaving of parental suggestion with the original tendencies of the various children is the delicate thing that makes each family individual. It is also the delicate thing that makes parenthood a nervous occupation. When parental suggestion is going to interweave delightfully as planned, and when it is not going to interweave at all, is something not foretold in the prophets.

The question of parental influence

becomes more complex as the family grows older and more informally organized. Sometimes a son or daughter wants to carry out a pet project without any advice or warning or help from anybody. There is nothing rash or guilty about his plan. He simply happens to be in the mood to act, not in committee, but of himself. To achieve this, surrounded by a united and conversational family, becomes a game of skill. To dodge advice, he avoids the most innocent questions. At such times as these, the wisest parents wonder what they have done to forfeit confidence. They see this favorite son of theirs executing the most harmless plans with all the secrecy of the young poisoning princes of the Renaissance.

When this happens, the over-sensitive parent grieves, the dictatorial parent rails, but the philosophical parent picks up whatever interesting morsels he can on the side, and cocks a weather eye.

"Robert seems to have a good many engagements," wrote the mother of a popular son in a letter to an absent daughter, "but whether the nature of the engagements is social, athletic, or philanthropic, we can only infer from the equipment with which he sets out. I inferred the first this morning when he asked me to have his dress-suit sent to be pressed; but I could not be certain until Mrs. Stone said casually that Robert was to be a guest at Mrs. Gardiner's dinner next week. Don't you love to see such tender intimacy between mother and son?"

Secrecy of this kind is not the monopoly of sons. Excellent young women have chopped ice and frozen sherbet behind closed doors because they did not want to be told again not to get the ice all over the back piazza. Certain warnings go with certain projects as inevitably as rubbers with the rain. The practised mother has so often found the warnings necessary, that the mere sight of the act produces the formula by rote. Model sons and daughters should accept these hints with gratitude, thus avoiding all friction, however minor. But rather than be advised to do that which they were planning to do already, the most loyal of daughters will resort to clandestine measures, and go stealthily with the ice-pick as with a poniard beneath a

cloak. This annoys an affectionate and capable mother very much. And she has a right to be annoyed, has she not? After all, it is her ice-pick.

There is something of spirited affection about the memory of all these early broils. They were heated enough at the time, for the most violent emotions can fly out at a trifling cause. Remarks made in these turbulent moments are often taken as a revelation of your true and inward self. The sentiments that you express in your moment of wrath sound like something that you have been repressing for years and are now turning loose upon an enlightened world. There is an air of desperate sincerity about your remarks that makes your hearers feel that here, at last, they have the truth.

With friends, after such an outburst, you could never feel quite the same again. But with your relatives, such moments can be lived down — as once occurred in our own family when our father one hot summer day sent Geoffrey back to town to perform a forgotten errand. I had not heard of the event until I took my place at table.

"Where's Geoffrey?" said I.

"I sent him back to get a letter he forgot," said my father.

"In all this heat?" I protested. "Well, if I had been in his place, I'd have gone away and stayed away."

"Well, you could," said my father serenely.

"Well, I will," said Little Sunshine, and walked out of the door and up the street in a rage.

After you have left your parental home as suddenly as this, there comes a moment when you have the sensation of being what is termed "all dressed up with no place to go." You feel that your decision, though sudden, is irrevocable, because going back would mean death to your pride. You try to fight off the practical thought that you can hardly go far without hat or scrip. Therefore, when Geoffrey met his eloping sister at the corner, it was with some little diplomacy that he learned my history and took me back to the table under his wing. The conversation barely paused as we took our places. Our father went on affably serving the salad to the just and the unjust alike. If, at this point, I had been treated with the contumely that I deserved, the

memory would be unpleasant in the minds of all. As it is, the family now mentions it as the time when Margaret ran away to sea.

The only thing that can make minor friction hurtful is the disproportionate importance that it can assume when it is treated as a major issue, or taken as an indication of mutual dislike. It is often an indication of the opposite, though at the moment the contestants would find this hard to believe. Kept in its place, however, we find in it later a great deal of humorous charm, because it belongs to a period when we dealt with our brethren with a primitive directness not possible in later years. An intricate ambition, this matter of harmony in the home. Ideally, every family would like to have

a history of uninterrupted adorations and exquisite accord. But growth implies change, change implies adjustment, and adjustment among varied personalities implies friction. Kept at the minimum, kept in its place, such friction does not estrange. Instead, it becomes a means to an intimate acquaintance with one another's traits and moods — an intimacy of understanding not far remote from love.

BOSTON STREETS

AM trying to learn how to get from the Majestic Theatre to the South Station. I am convinced that in time I might be able to learn this, if I were not also trying at the same time to learn how to get from the Hollis Street Theatre to the Dennison Manufacturing Company on Franklin Street.

I suppose that trying to solve two problems simultaneously is always confusing. A student trying to compute problems with both hands at the same time — problems dealing respectively with yards and pounds — might ultimately confuse his inches with ounces.

Similarly, I confuse Eliot Street and Essex, Kneeland and Otis.

My brother Geoffrey who goes with me to Boston thinks that this is funny; that is, he thinks it something appalling that should be remedied. In consequence of this, he draws for me a series of beautiful little sketches on an envelope he has about him. He letters the roads meticulously with a fountain pen, traces our route-to-be with little arrows, and then flings me heartlessly into the Boston Streets.

Boston Streets, and Boston Streets on an envelope, are not alike at all. On the envelope, the streets are simple lines, all related to each other; in reality, each street is an individual personality, distracting you from a noble grasp of the Whole, by presenting

the sole gigantic unit of itself, further complicated by detail. Geoffrey is not bothered by a unit, or by a detail. He branches from one street into another with as sure an instinct as a cat who retraces on foot a journey once traversed in a bag.

This is not because he *knows* Boston, but because he has a *capacity* for Boston. He leads me patiently over one route a great many times, verifying our position at intervals with reference to his map. After a day at my books, I am faint-heartedly supposed to have comprehended a fact. When this actually takes place, it is very hard for me to conceal my pride in any trifling bit of erudition which I may have accidentally picked up about Boston. Once I distinctly remember saying to

Geoffrey, "Do you want to walk down to the Colonial Theatre or shall we go by Subway?" Since we were at that time near the entrance of a suitable subway, my good brother stared at me in radiant expectation. I fear that he hoped that I was at last laying a slight hold on a working knowledge of his favorite city. But his hope was unfounded, for this glimmer of mine was one of only four facts that I have actually been able to learn about the crooked miles in Boston.

The remaining three truths are here recorded for the curious.

I know the Public Library, from any angle, without map or guide, by its fair face alone, and how to reach it from the station at Back Bay. (This, in such a meagre description of Boston, might

perhaps qualify as two distinct facts.) I know that if one walks far enough past the Library, in the direction in which the lady with the black ball is looking, one will eventually come to Commonwealth Avenue, where eozoic cabbies may be seen. And now that we have unearthed, on our way back to the station, the Copley Theatre, I am sure that I could go to Boston, friendless, find this theatre, lunch across the street, and retrace my steps to some proper railway.

It may seem to the observer that I am abnormally interested in finding my way to the theatres. I am. This is my primary reason for going to Boston at all; and surely it is a quiet wish to do a little shopping and get a lunch before the play begins. Therefore, our main

interest lies in locating, on each trip, one theatre and one depot. Then, if time permits, I am supposed to articulate a shop of some kind from the tangle of Butterfly Boxes, Corner Book Stores, and Florist windows, and some sort of hostelry where we can eat. If my guide is less obdurate than usual about compelling me to find my way without his assistance, he shows me the front steps of a Department Store *once*. Then I am supposed to know that store for all time, when viewing it from all angles — from its front door, its back door, its basement, and from its roof. I am supposed to know what store I am in from the looks of the elevator boys. It always gives me acute pain to disappoint a valued friend. Hence, in a department store, I suffer.

Once inside the store, I can find my way about very easily. I merely do not know what street I am on.

There are certain things in Boston about which even Geoffrey inquires. This concession on his part, instead of bringing him down to my fallible human level, instantly elevates him to a still higher caste. He makes his inquiries of policemen, and he understands what they say. When a policeman directs *me* — solitary — to go up one street and down another, and mixes in a little of the Public Garden or the Common, I cannot carry his kind words in my mind, even with the aid of a mnemonic. He cannot direct me from the known to the unknown, because I know nothing. He cannot explain to me; he has to go with me. I do not

know the Common from the Public Garden. They both look like gardens to me, both equally public, and neither, common. "But," protests my brother, "the Public Garden is regular — a rectangle. And the Common is irregular — a trapezium." This is perfectly true on the envelope (now dirty). But when you are in the park itself, you are not especially aware of its shape. Individual pigeons are more obvious. The park is too big to look square.

In just this same way, Washington Street is too big to look parallel. When you are on Washington Street, and it alone, it is not blindingly parallel to anything, unless, perhaps, the other side of itself. And if my policeman, on his pretty horse, should tell me that that was Tremont Street, I should

believe him. Boston has done as bad. It would be no stranger than it is to spring miraculously from Summer Street into Winter, simply by following it across the road. In fact, I was not aware that we had changed streets at all, when on my maiden trip through this section. I preserved to the end an hallucination that I was still on Summer Street.

Perhaps a few will do me the magnificent honor of absolving me from boasting, when I say that I am capable of apprehending really nice bits of information in other walks of life;— other than Boston walks. I can pick you out a pneumonia germ from under the microscope, and count your red corpuscles for you. I can receive the Continental Code by wireless, and

play on a violoncello. I can get a baby to sleep.

But I cannot tell you where you are in Boston. There are people who would not admit this. They would set themselves, with their faces steadfastly toward the Hub, to learn. Geoffrey is one of these. But I have neither the time nor the proper shoes. I readily admit that Boston is too much for me at my age. So I take my brother with me. Then I placidly relegate Boston Streets to that list of things which I am constitutionally unable to learn: — how to tat, just what is a Stock, and what a Bond, and the difference between a Democrat and a Republican.

TO HORSE

DUCK," we used to read in the primer at school, "a duck is a long low animal covered with feathers." Similarly, a horse is a long high animal, covered with confusion. This applies to the horse as we find him in the patriotic Parade, where a brass-band precedes him, an unaccustomed rider surmounts him, and a drum-corps brings up his rear.

In our own Welcome Home Parade, after the boys returned from France, the Legion decided to double the number of its mounted effectives: all the overseas officers should ride. All the overseas officers were instantly on their

feet. Their protests were loud and heated. A horse, they said, was something that they personally had never bestridden. They offered to ride anything else. They would fly down the avenue in Spads, or do the falling leaf over the arch of triumph. They would ride tanks or motor-cycles or army-trucks. But a horse was a thing of independent locomotion, not to be trifled with. It was not the idea of getting killed that they objected to, it was the looks of the thing. By "the thing," they meant not the horse, but the rider.

In spite of the veto of the officers, the motion was carried by acclamation. The mediæval charm of a mounted horse-guard instantly kindled the community imagination. The chaplain,

fresh from the navy, was promised a milk-white palfrey for his especial use, if he would wear his ice-cream suit for the occasion.

There was no time to practise before the event, but the boys were told to give themselves no anxiety about mounts. Well-bred and competent horses would appear punctually just before the time for falling in. The officers were instructed to go to a certain corner of a side street, find the fence behind the garage where the animals would be tied, select their favorite form of horse from the collection they would see there, and ride him up to the green.

When Geoffrey came home and said that he was to ride a horse in the procession, our mother, who had been a good horsewoman in her girlhood, took

him aside and gave him a few quiet tips. Some horses, she said, had been trained to obey certain signals, and some to obey the exact opposite. For instance, some would go faster if you reined them in, and some would slow down. Some waited for light touches from their master's hand or foot, and others for their master's voice. You had to study your horse as an individual.

Geoffrey said that he was glad to hear any little inside gossip of this sort, and made his way alone to the place appointed, skilfully dodging friends. We gathered that if he had to have an interview with a horse, he preferred to have it with nobody looking on.

The fence behind the garage was fringed with horses securely tied, and

the top of the fence was fringed with a row of small boys, waiting. Geoffrey approached the line of horses, and glanced judicially down the row. Books on "Reading Character at Sight" make a great point of the distinctions between blond and brunette, the concave and the convex profile, the glance of the eye, and the manner of shaking hands. Geoffrey could tell at a glance that the handshake of these horses would be firm and full of decision. As one man they turned and looked at him, and their eyes were level and inscrutable.

"Which of these horses," said he to the gang on the fence-top, "would you take?"

"This one!" said an eager spokesman. "He didn't move a muscle since they hitched 'im."

This recommendation decided the matter instantly. Repose of manner is an estimable trait in the horse.

Geoffrey looked his animal over with an artist's eye. It was a slender creature, with that spare type of beauty that we associate with the Airedale dog. The horse was not a blond. The stirrups hung invitingly at the sides. Geoffrey closed the inspection with satisfaction, and prepared to mount.

In mounting, does one first untie one's horse and then get on, or may one, as in a steam-launch, get seated first and then cast off the painter? Geoffrey could not help recalling a page from "Pickwick Papers," where Mr. Winkle is climbing up the side of a tall horse at the Inn, and the 'ostler's boy whispers, "Blowed if the gen'l'man was n't for

getting up the wrong side." Well, what governs the right and wrong side of a horse? Douglas Fairbanks habitually avoids the dilemma by mounting from above — from the roof of a Mexican monastery, for instance, or the fire-escape of an apartment house. From these points he lands, perpendicularly. With this ideal in mind, Geoffrey stepped on from the fence, clamped his legs against the sides of the horse, and walked him out into the street.

When I say that he walked him out into the street, I use the English language as I have seen it used in books, but I think that it was an experienced rider who first used the idiom. Geoffrey says that he did not feel, at any time that afternoon, any sensation of walking his horse, or of doing anything

else decisive with him. He walked, to be sure, dipping his head and rearing it, like a mechanical swan. But on a horse you miss the sensation of direct control that you have with a machine. With a machine, you press something, and if a positive reaction does not follow, you get out and fix something else. Not so with the horse. When you get upon him you cut yourself off from all accurately calculable connection with the world. He is, in the last analysis, an independent personality. His feet are on the ground, and yours are not.

We bow to literary convention, therefore, when we say that Geoffrey walked his horse.

Far ahead of him, he saw the khaki backs of two of his friends who were

also walking their horses. One by one they ambled up to the green and took places in the ranks. Geoffrey discovered that his horse would stand well if allowed to droop his long neck and close his eyes. Judged as a military figure, however, he was a disgrace to the army. If you drew up the reins to brace his head, he thought it a signal to start, and you had to take it all back, hastily. With the relaxed rein he collapsed again, his square head bent in silent prayer.

With the approach of the band, however, all this changed. He reared tentatively. Geoffrey discouraged that. Then he curled his body in an unlovely manner — an indescribable gesture, a sort of sidelong squirm in semi-circular formation. His rider straightened

him out with a fatherly slap on the flank.

It was time to start. The band led off. Joy to the world, thought the horse, the band is gone. The rest of the cavalry moved forward in docile files, but not he. If that band was going away, he would be the last person to pursue it. Instead of going forward, he backed. He backed and backed. There is no emergency brake on a horse. He would have backed to the end of the procession, through the Knights of Columbus, the Red Cross, the Elks, the Masons, the D.A.R., the Fire Department, and the Salvation Army, if it had not been for the drum-corps that led the infantry. The drum-corps behind him was as terrifying as the band in front. To avoid the drum-

corps, he had to spend part of his time going away from it. Thus his progress was a little on the principle of the pendulum. He backed from the band until he had to flee before the drums.

The ranks of men were demoralized by needless mirth. Army life dulls the sensibilities to the spectacle of suffering. They could do nothing to help, except to make a clear passage for Geoffrey as he alternately backed from the brasses and escaped from the drums. Vibrating in this way, he could only discourse to his horse with words of feigned affection, and pray for the panic to pass off. With a cranky automobile, now, one could have parked down a side street, and later joined the procession, all trouble repaired. But there was noth-

ing organic the matter with this horse. Geoffrey could not have parked him in any case, because it would have been no more possible to turn him toward the cheering crowds on the pavement than to make him follow the band. The crowds on the street, in fact, began to regard these actions as a sort of interesting and decorative manœuvre, so regular was the advance and retirement — something in the line of a cotillion. And then the band stopped playing for a little. Instantly the horse took his place in the ranks, marched serenely, arched his slim neck, glanced about. All was as it should be.

Geoffrey's place was just behind the marshal, supposedly to act as his aide. During all this absence from his post of duty, the marshal had not noticed

his defection or turned around at all. Now he did so, hastily.

"Just slip back, will you," he said, "and tell Monroe not to forget the orders at the reviewing stand."

Geoffrey opened his mouth to explain his disqualifications as courier, but at that moment the band struck up, and his charger backed precipitately. The marshal, seeing this prompt obedience to his request, faced front, and Geoffrey was left steadily receding, no time to explain — and the drum-corps was taking a vacation. There was, therefore, no reason for the horse ever to stop backing, unless he should back around the world until he heard the band behind him again. As he backed through the ranks of infantry, Geoffrey shouted the marshal's mes-

sage to the officer of the day. He had to talk fast — ships that pass in the night. But the message was delivered, and he could put his whole mind on his horse.

He tried all the signals for forward locomotion that he could devise. Mother had told him that some horses wait for light touches from their master's hand or foot. Geoffrey touched his animal here and there, back of the ear — at the base of the brain. He even kicked a trifle. He jerked the reins in Morse Code and Continental, to the tune of S O S. The horse understood no codes.

They were now in the ranks of the Knights of Columbus, and the marching boys were making room for them with shouts of sympathetic glee. Must

they back through the Red Cross, where all the girls in town were marching, and into the Daughters of the Revolution float where our mother sat with a group of ladies around the spinning-wheel? Geoffrey remembered that the Red Cross had a band, if it would only play. It struck up just in time. The horse instantly became a fugitive in the right direction. On they sped, the reviewing stand almost in sight. The drum-corps had not begun to play. Could they reach the cavalry before it was too late? Geoffrey hated to pass the reviewing stand in the guise of a deserter, yet here he was cantering among the Odd Fellows, undoubtedly A.W.O.L.

But Heaven was kind. The drums waited. Through their ranks dashed

Geoffrey at full speed, and into the midst of his companions. The reviewing stand was very near. At a signal, all bands and all drums struck up together. The horse, in stable equilibrium at last, daring not to run forward or to run backward, or to bolt to either side, fell into step and marched. Deafening cheers, flying handkerchiefs; Geoffrey and his horse stole past, held in the ranks by a delicate balance of four-cornered fear. If you fear something behind you and something in front of you, and things on both sides of you, and if your fear of all points of the compass is precisely equal, you move with the movements of the globe. Geoffrey's horse moved that way past the stand.

People took their pictures. Our

father, beaming down from the galaxy on the stand, was pleased. Later he told Geoffrey how well he sat his horse.

But that evening Geoffrey had a talk with his mother, as man to man. He told her that, if these Victory Parades were going to be held often, he should vote for compulsory military training for the horse. He told her the various things his horse had done, how he went to and fro, going to when urged fro, and going fro when urged not to.

"Probably he had been trained to obey the opposite signals," said our mother. "You must study your horse as an individual."

That horse was an individual. Geoffrey studied him as such. He is quite willing to believe that he had been

trained to obey the opposite signals. But Geoffrey says that he still cannot stifle one last question in his mind: — signals opposite to what?

WHEELS AND HOW THEY GO ROUND

IT is a simple matter, I have been told, to keep a locomotive running smoothly on its track, once it is well coaled-up and started. In an artistic moment in a summer vacation, Margaret and I likened our house and all its simple well-oiled machinery to a locomotive — Mother and Carrie being the engineer.

Therefore, we accepted rather blandly the charge of the house and grounds while the engineer took a vacation. I rather think we had it in mind to look in occasionally upon the house as it ran along, and to save the

bulk of the day for other things. We were already accustomed to the complexities of a house; we had officiated at each separate complexity. But I am not sure that we did not plan to run the house a trifle more nonchalantly than the average anxious housewife, and welcome both our daily duties and any unexpected guests with a minimum of morbid foreboding.

The first thing we noticed after we were left alone was a little steady drip in the back room. This was the refrigerator leaking. When this fact had once been agreed upon, Margaret and I began to see with eyes of the mind fragments of motion pictures in which the refrigerator was being fixed. It is queer what vague remnants of a scene will stay with you, when at the time of

the scene you were not responsible for the outcome. Margaret, from her ever-active and interesting memory, called up Mother's dream-shape at the sil-cock, all ready to turn on the garden-hose. I dimly remembered Carrie with her arm under the refrigerator holding the hose and calling respectfully from the back room — "All ready, mum." So we hatched a plot and proceeded to act it.

We had to assume the pipe at the rear of the ice-box, for we could not see it. We assumed also that it was plugged up. I had chanced once upon Carrie, lying prone on a rug in the back room, directing the nozzle of the hose into this inaccessible pipe-hole near the farther wall. I elected to plumb for the hole, with Margaret to run about

alternately holding matches for me and working the spray. My arms are the longer; her fear of fire is somewhat less. After I had found the hole, Margaret attached the hose to the silcock outside the house, threaded it through the screen door, passed the nozzle to me, and went back to turn on the water. Hose in hand, face averted, — prone, — I waited. Prone means on your face. If you turn your head to look under the refrigerator, your arm is not long enough. I directed the water almost wholly by the Braille system. Why it should have entered into the heart of man to construct a refrigerator so deep that the arm of man is not long enough to reach its drain, will have to be explained to us when we reach the city four-square. But a good workman

never finds fault with his tools, Margaret said, so we set to work with what Nature offered us.

I soon found that no cue was needed for some of my lines. My manner of shouting, "Turn it off!" was extremely unstudied; — art disguising art. Twice the back room was inundated. I became a saturated solution. I felt like the brave boy of Haarlem. Margaret came in and advanced the theory that, when you have reached a certain stage of wetness, it does not matter at all how much more water you lie in. Acting on this supposition, and with my consent, she turned on all the city's water-power with great suddenness. I shall always think that this did make a difference in my wetness, but it dislodged the obstruction. We could hear

the glad water leaping and gurgling through the pipe out of doors.

Why this pipe should have had any connection with the boiler and attendant pipes behind the stove remains forever shrouded in mystery. These pipes began to leak on the morning of the second day, and we sent for a plumber. He pronounced us unpatchable, unsolderable. Margaret and I convened. We decided, in committee of the whole, to be re-piped and re-boilered. We did not know then that the plumbers were going to find still more serious trouble with the pipes that led to the main. Were we justified in ordering complete repairs? Our eternal query of Life became, "What would Mother do?" We went the whole figure—well up into three figures.

It was not until the third day that we succeeded in making our nonchalance at all prominent. We invited a guest to supper, nonchalantly. She was not the type of guest that you take into the kitchen and tie an apron around. In her honor, we decided to have, among other things, popovers and cherry pie. We decided that we could conventionally have popovers because the hour was really a supper hour; that we might have cherry pie because the meal was really a dinner. To make this strange plan at all intelligible, I shall have to state that, as far as our names are known, we are famous for our popovers and our cherry pie. We were at our nonchalant best.

Our cherry tree is a unique specimen among the vegetables. It has a curious

short, gnarled trunk just as a cherry tree should; but, aside from that, it runs along the general lines of a spirea. Each main branch, nearly six inches in diameter at the point of departure, sprangles instantly into showers of fragile twigs. These in turn branch gracefully higher and higher, occasional cherries on the outskirts. To pick our cherries, one really ought to be a robin. Each cherry has an exquisite red cheek and a black ant running to and fro across it.

We chose Margaret to pick the cherries. We chose her because she is lighter than I by half a stone; and we thought the fewer stone on the twigs, the better. Then it was going to be her pie.

The cherries which could be reached

from the ground were satisfactory in the extreme. They rattled into the pail, just as other people's cherries rattle. It would have been my instinct to leave these till the last. But I was not picking the cherries. I found it impossible, however, to stay away from the cherry-picking. Margaret is rather quick in some of her mannerisms. And her mannerism of mounting our cherry tree was little short of lightning. She was wearing white silk hose and white canvas slippers. Personally I did not consider these correct climbing shoes, but Margaret is accustomed, when far from home, to choose her own boots for all occasions, and to pay for new ones when her choice proves disastrous. So I watched her rise above me without remark.

I freely admit that it always seems

less dangerous to one whose feet can feel the crotches on the tree, and on whose arm the tin pail is, than to the anxious relative on the ground below. As Margaret's manœuvres transmitted unpleasant little cracks along the tree, I recalled bits of sage advice that I had on a time given to my mother concerning her attitude when Geoffrey was climbing trees. I had told Mother that Geoffrey was just as safe in a tree as in his bed. But Margaret did not give this reassuring appearance. Perhaps I like Margaret better than I do Geoffrey. Certainly I was more afraid she would fall out of the cherry tree.

She finally passed out of my sight. After a prolonged interval of silence, I suggested to Margaret that she come down.

"My foot is caught," returned my sister, her tone of voice wholly explanatory. "It won't come out."

"The shoe tapers to a point," I called encouragingly. "Try to turn it sideways and pull backwards at the same time."

"Barbara," said my sister tonelessly, "I just said it would n't come out."

"Then you'll have to take your foot out, and leave the slipper up there," I responded with finality.

"What would Mother do?" called Margaret from her lady's bower.

It was so obvious, even to me, that Mother would not have been up a tree at this hour that I could only repeat my original project of abandoning the slipper. I learned afterwards that it is not an entirely uncomplicated process

to buckle in the centre when swinging in a tree-top with one foot stationary and a tin pail on one's arm, and untie a slipper-strap without tipping the pail or falling out of the tree. Margaret soon appeared within my line of vision, listing dangerously, chastened, dignified, and stocking-footed. She reminded me simultaneously, as she descended, of a mystic Russian première danseuse, a barefooted native swinging down his cocoanut grove, and High Diddle Dumpling my son John.

I was rash enough later to inquire into the mechanics of retrieving the slipper, but Margaret, as she finished her tart, replied so appropriately in the words of the Scriptures as to be too sacrilegious to repeat.

As our nonchalant day wore on, I

lighted the gas-oven for popovers. Popovers are casuals. They are not supposed to be a *chef d'œuvre*. They are the high-grade moron of the hot-bread family. A guest expects the popovers to be good, just as he expects the butter to be good. I expected mine to be good.

As they neared the crisis, the city gas was shut off. I acted instantly, treating the phenomenon as a rare exception in housekeeping. I aroused a dying fire in the coal range with great speed and an abundance of kindling, and conveyed my gems across kitchen. It is a sweet-tempered popover, indeed, which will bear shifting from a hot oven to a moderately comfortable one. I began steadily to lose my unconcern. Once on my knees before an oven door, I usually ask no quarter and receive

no advice. Advice is sometimes given me, but my advisers realize that it is not being received. This time I called Margaret in consultation.

"I think they are going to pop," she pronounced judicially, "but not over." She was right.

Does Life hold, I wonder, a more sorrowful moment than that time when a true cook has to instruct her guest to scoop out the inside of her popover for the chickens, and eat only the outside? Every one knows that delicate tinkling sound that a good popover makes when tossed on a china plate. These made somewhat the same sound as a Florida orange. We learned quite cogently that evening that Hospitality may depend, not upon greatness of heart, but upon the gas stove.

This experience of ours, however, could not be regarded strictly as a test case. Any one would admit that all of our adversity was unusual. It is the rare exception when all the pipes in the house burst at once, when there is no gas in the gas-stove, and when one loses a slipper in making a cherry pie.

It took another day to show us that running a house *normally* consists in dealing with a succession of unusual events.

We did not court disaster, or attempt anything ambitious. We had not even planned to invite any more company. But an old friend of Geoffrey's appeared at our door in uniform with his new wife, to wait over a train. Margaret promptly invited them to lunch. Our lunch, as already planned, was

simple. We told them that it would be simple. Margaret leans, during hot weather, to such things as iced tea, lettuces, cheese wafers, and simple frozen desserts. Fiction has it that the water-ices are the simplest of anything. They *are* simple to eat. We had planned to freeze the water-ice together. But in view of the fact that we had company, Margaret, who had first suggested our simple dessert, slipped quietly out to freeze it alone.

Ice may be cold stuff, but it is heating to chop. Three minutes may freeze a pudding in some freezers, but not in ours. As much time wore away, I gradually hitched my chair in a backward direction, to permit a stealthy glance at Margaret on the back piazza. It is almost as wearing to hold

our freezer down as it is to turn the crank. Margaret was doing both at once, stopping frequently to chase a slippery chunk of ice about with her pick, chivying the bits of ice and salt finally into a cup. Her cheeks had become flushed a vivid freight-car color. It was with great relief that I finally saw her peer into the freezer, remove the dasher, and proceed to seal up her confection and cover it with newspapers and an astrakhan cape.

The precise moment when a water-ice becomes simple is when it is smoothly slipped into a long-stemmed sherbet glass. Our guests, we think, enjoyed our simple meal. But after they had gone, the word which exactly described our state of mind was not the word nonchalant.

"Barbara!" said Margaret energetically, "for supper, let's open a box of blueberries."

We did. Blueberries really *are* simple. We made our evening meal of them, accompanied by a few left-over popover skins.

Margaret and I still feel that we could deal somewhat hopefully with a leaking pipe. We still think that our calamities were a little out of the ordinary. But we do not wonder quite so much now that Mother does not wholly appreciate her dinner when she has guests, that she does not oftener make simple frozen desserts, or that she stays in such close company with her wheels when they are on their way around.

THE WILL TO BOSS

HERE are people who have a right to boss; — parents, for instance, and generals in the army. With these we are not concerned. But most of us, not officially in authority, now and then have ideas of our own that we are willing to pass on. Some of us have them more than others.

The typical boss is usually a capable executive with a great unselfish imagination and the gift of speech. He usually knows enough to curb himself in public; it is only in the home that his tendencies run riot. In a family where all the brothers and sisters belong to this type, you can run riot only to a certain

extent. If you go too far, you meet somebody else also running riot, and collisions ensue.

If you are an elder sister, for instance, with a tendency toward what your younger brothers call "getting bossy," you find yourself constantly having vivid mental pictures of the best way to do a given thing. With these fancy-pictures in mind, it is hard for you to believe that your companions have any ideas at all. As you look at another person from the outside, you find it hard to believe that his head is working. If our heads were only made like these ovens with glass in the door, so that you could watch the half-baked thinking rise and fall — but no. Your brother sitting carelessly on the veranda may have his mind on the time;

he may be planning just how he will presently rush to his room, bathe and change, snatch his hat, run to the station, and connect with the train on daylight-saving time. He may be thinking hard about all this, but he does not look as if he were. You fidget while the minutes go by, and then you go to the window and speak. If your spirit has been broken by much browbeating for past attempts to give advice, you speak timidly. If you are of stouter stuff, you speak roughly to your little boy.

"Tom," you say (timidly or roughly as the case may be) — "I suppose you know what time it is."

"Yes," says Tom.

That ought to end it. But if you are a true boss, you go on. You know that

you are being irritating. You know that Tom is of age. But you are willing, like all great prophets, to risk unpopularity for the sake of your Message. The spirit of the crier in the wilderness is upon you, and you keep at it until one of two things happens. If Tom is in a good temper, he goes upstairs to humor you, with a condescending tread and a tired sigh. If he is fractious, he argues: Did you ever know him to miss a train? Did you ever hear of his forgetting an appointment? How do you suppose he ever manages to get to places when you are away from home?

My brother Geoffrey, in his day, has been a great sufferer from this kind of thing. As memory reviews his youth, there stands out only one occasion when he really achieved anything like free-

dom from sisterly counsel. This was when he picked the pears. The pears on six large loaded trees were ready to harvest. Geoffrey said that he was willing to pick, but not to pick to order. We would have to engage to let him pick the pears in his own way. We promised, though we knew too well our brother's way of picking pears. He holds quite a little reception from the tree-tops, entertaining passers-by with delightful repartee, and giving everybody a pear. As time goes on, he gets to throwing pears. "Somebody will get hurt," said our mother anxiously. But a contract is a contract, and we tried not to look out of the window. In this unaccustomed air of freedom, Geoffrey's spirits rose and rose. High in the branches, taking his time, he grew

more and more abandoned. He had just reached the very top of the tallest tree when he saw far up the street the form of the ugliest and largest dog who ever visited our town, a strange white creature named Joe — a dog hard to define, but resembling one's childhood idea of the blood-hound type. Every one spoke of this dog as "Joseph A. Graham": "Joe" seemed too simple a name to be in scale with his size and ferocity. Down the street he came, loafing along. Geoffrey, ordinarily kind to pets, selected a large mellow pear, aimed it with steady eye, and hit Joseph A. Graham, accurately, amidships. Joseph flew up into the air, landed on a slant, gathered his large feet together for a plunge, and came dashing down the street with murder

in his great red eye. At that moment Geoffrey looked down and saw with horror that an elderly gentleman was just coming up the street. It was obvious that Joseph thought that the old gentleman threw the pear. Geoffrey, emitting hoarse cries of warning, came swarming down the tree to the rescue, swinging from branch to branch like an orang-outang. The elderly gentleman, grasping the situation in the nick of time, stepped neatly inside our screen door, and Joseph, thwarted of reprisal, snuffed around the steps, muttered to himself for a few moments, and then went shuffling on down the street. Geoffrey, still ardently apologizing to the passer-by, went back to his tree-top to recover from this, the only troubled moment in that influential day.

By clever bargaining, you can occasionally buy off your natural advisers in this way, and enjoy perfect independence. But there are projects that really call for a good boss. When a number of people are at work together, the trained worker should direct the group. Even in your family, you are allowed to be an autocrat in things that are your specialty. But you are supposed to be pleasant about it. This is not so easy when you are in the full heat of action. When you have your mind on a difficult project, your commands to your helpers are apt to sound curt. You are likely to talk to them as if they were beneath you. The unskilled helper in an affair demanding skill gives the impression of belonging to an inferior class — something a little below the

social status of a coolie. He even feels inferior, and is therefore touchy. If you order him too gruffly, he is likely to take offence and knock off for the day.

Barbara, for instance, once very nearly lost a valued slave when I was giving her my awkward assistance about the camera. She had decided to take a picture of Israel Putnam's Wolf-Den from a spot where no camera-tripod had ever been pitched before. The Wolf-Den sits on a slant above a cliff in the deep woods. At one side of it there is a capital place from which to take its picture, a level spot on which a tripod will stand securely. From this point most of the pictures hitherto taken of the Den were snapped. But Barbara was resolved to get a full front view to show the lettering on a

bronze tablet that had recently been placed on the Den. She wanted a time exposure, and she said that she was going to need assistance. Her idea was to stand on a jutting rock just at the edge of the cliff and hold the camera in the desired position while the rest of the party adjusted the legs of the tripod beneath it.

Every one who has ever set up a tripod knows that its loosely hinged legs can be elongated or telescoped by a system of slides and screws. In order to arrange our tripod with all its three pods on the uneven ground, we found that we must shorten one leg to its extreme shortness, and lengthen the second leg to its maximum length. This left the third leg out in the air over the brink of the precipice. Our guest was

to manage the short leg, our mother was to manage the important and strategic leg among the rocks, and I offered to build a combination of bridge and flying buttress out from the slope of the cliff, for the third.

We started our project with that cordial fellow-feeling that rises from a common faith in a visionary enterprise, and I am sure that we could have kept that beautiful spirit to the end if it had not been for the mosquitoes. There are no wolves at the Wolf-Den now, but on a muggy day the mosquitoes are just as hungry. They rise all around in insubstantial drifts, never seeming to alight, yet stinging in clusters. A true Wolf-Den mosquito can land, bite, and make good his escape before you have finished brush-

ing him out of your eyes. You cannot brush insects out of your eyes, slap the back of your neck, and take a picture at the same time. Barbara, both hands busy holding the camera, was desperately kicking the ankle of one foot with the toe of the other. I counted fifteen mosquitoes sitting unmoved around the rims of her low shoes.

"Don't take too much pains with that bridge," said she to me in considerate company tones.

"No," said I respectfully, "but I have to build it up high enough to meet the leg."

"Well, then, hurry," said she, still kindly.

"Yes," said I evenly, "I am."

When two sisters discourse like this before a guest, there creeps into their

voices a note of preternatural sweetness, a restraint and simplicity of utterance that speak volumes to the trained ear.

I was hurrying all I could, but for my unnatural bridge I had not the materials I could have wished. I found a weathered wooden fence-rail, balanced one end of it on the cliff and the other end in the crotch of a big tree that leaned over the side hill; but this bridge had to be built up with a pile of sand, leaves, small stones, and stubble balanced carefully upon it. Meanwhile, my mother was busily drilling a hole in the rock to make a firm emplacement at a distance for leg number two.

Finally our three positions were approximately correct, and the more del-

icate process of adjustment began. Barbara, from under her dark cloth, gave muffled directions. We obeyed, shifting, screwing, unscrewing, adjusting. Our guest was still cheery. Success hovered before us in plain sight. So did the mosquitoes. Barbara's directions began to sound tense. They sounded especially tense when she spoke to me. I was balancing precariously part-way down the shale cliff, digging in my heels and doing the best I could with the materials at hand. Looking timidly up at my sister's black-draped, mosquito studded figure, I had been first conciliatory, then surly, then sullen. Barbara had now begun to focus.

"Lower!" said Barbara between her teeth.

Obediently we all three lowered.

"No, no, not you!" said Barbara to me. "Yours was too low already."

There are moments in this life when the presence of a guest is an impediment to free speech. Barbara, as anybody can see, had the advantage. She was the commanding officer. Any response from me would have been a retort from the ranks. Since one of her other two helpers was her mother and the other a guest, her words to them had to be sugared. In a sugar-shortage, it is the lower classes who suffer. By this time one could easily distinguish her directions to me by their truculent tone.

"Make the bridge a trifle higher," said she curtly.

I obediently brought another grain of sand.

"Higher!"

I silently added five smooth stones.

"Oh, build it up!" she begged. "You ought to see the slant."

I pried a large boulder from the ledge and balanced it on the rail.

"Your rail's breaking!" cried my mother, so suddenly that I lost my footing.

I seized the leg of the tripod in one hand, the branch of a tree with the other, while the flying buttress went rumbling down the defile, and I was left clinging to the bare rock, that refuge of the wild goat.

We have now some very attractive pictures of the Den, taken from a spot where no tripod was ever pitched before, and where I hope no tripod will be pitched again. But as we developed the plates that night, I told Barbara

that I did not think that I was qualified to help her much about the camera any more.

"You were all right," said she kindly. "It was the mosquitoes."

And I was mollified by this as perhaps I could have been by no logic in the world.

The right to boss is conceded to the expert. It is also sometimes extended to members of the family who are for the time being in the centre of the stage. At such times you are permitted to dictate — when you are to have a guest, for instance, or when you are about to be married. For a day or two before the wedding, your wish is law. You really need to stay on hand until the last minute, however, to enforce the letter of the law to the end. Otherwise,

circumstances may get ahead of you.

Geoffrey, for example, directly after announcing his engagement to our best friend Priscilla Sherwood, enjoyed a time of perfect power. He knew that he needed only to say, "Priscilla likes so and so," and so and so would follow. Barbara and I reminded him that we knew Priscilla better than he did, but we could not say that we were engaged to her. Just before the wedding, Geoffrey took us aside to explain seriously about his plans, and to give us our orders for the day.

"We don't want you to throw anything," said Geoffrey reasonably. "No rice or confetti or shoes. And you need n't even see us to the train. Priscilla does n't care about any demonstration, and I think it would be just

as well to go off quietly. We'd just as soon the other people on the train did n't know we were a bride and groom."

Barbara and I, struck with the originality of this point of view, promised to throw nothing. Priscilla, meanwhile, reasoned equally well with her brothers. After the wedding, we all stood cordially on the curbstone and let them drive off to the train. Then, deserted, the two families confronted each other rather blankly.

"It does n't seem as if they had actually gone, does it?" said Barbara uneasily.

"They would n't mind if we waved to them when the train goes out, would they?" began one of the Sherwoods tentatively.

Barbara was inspired. "Come on down to our house," said she, "and then they can see us from the train."

One of the advantages of a home near the railway is the fact that you can see your friends off on trips without leaving your dooryard. Each man for himself, we went streaming down the last hill, fearing at any minute to hear the train pull out. To our dismay, we saw that a long freight-train was standing on the siding in such a position as to cut off our view of the express.

"When you are on the train," I panted as I ran, "you can see our upstairs windows even when freight-cars are in the way."

"We'll wave out of the front windows," said Barbara, and we all rushed upstairs.

"They'll never think to look up here, will they?" said one of the brothers Sherwood anxiously as we peered out along the vista of track. "The pear trees are in the way."

"We might just step outside the window," said Barbara resourcefully. "The piazza roof is perfectly safe. Then they could n't help seeing us."

Wrapping our best clothes about us, we crept out through the window one by one, and went cautiously along the tin roof to a vantage-point beyond the pear trees. When a company of grown people goes walking on a tin roof, there are moments of shock when the tin bubbles snap and crackle, making a sound nothing short of terrifying, like the reverberations of season-cracks in the ice on a pond. We ranged ourselves

in a row near the eaves-pipe, just in time. The train went hooting by. They saw us. We waved the wedding flowers, and they waved back. We saw them laughing. We waved until the end of the train disappeared around the curve. And as we assisted each other politely one by one through the window again, we had a comfortable sensation of having wound up the affair with a finish and completeness that had been lacking after the first farewell.

Still feeling a little uplifted with excitement, we went up the street to report events to our grandmother.

"You mean to say that you went up on to the *roof* to wave?" said our grandmother.

"Well," said Barbara thoughtfully, "it did n't seem quite like going up

on the roof at the time. It all happened so gradually. We just stepped out."

"And they saw you?" inquired Grandmother.

"Oh, yes. Nobody could help it. Everybody saw us." Barbara glowed reminiscently.

"And you waved the wedding flowers?"

"Yes," said Barbara happily. "Father Sherwood gave us each an armful."

"Well," said our grandmother, resuming her sewing, "I should n't wonder if the other passengers on that train thought that something had happened to Geoffrey."

To govern one's own kinsmen successfully, one certainly does need to be

on the spot. One cannot afford to leave them for an instant. One should be alert and watchful, and as diplomatic as circumstances will allow. The ability to boss implies a ready understanding and the knack of seeing the end from the beginning. It implies also a hardy constitution and the gift of tongues. But after all, in the last analysis, it is largely a matter of the Will.

MORE TO IT THAN YOU'D THINK

AM often reminded of a lady, who, during the war, volunteered to oversee all the Canteen work for soldiers passing through our town. Her favorite phrase, accompanied by a surprised accent, became the following one: "There's more *to* this job than you'd think from the outside looking in." Then she would proceed with many astounding details: soldiers who required two cups of coffee, or three lumps of sugar, milk that in the course of time became dubious, and trains that in the course of time became late.

I sympathized with this lady and helped her wash the dishes. And I have never questioned her statement. Moreover, I have yet to find the job to which this statement does not apply. I suppose that, until you become a postal clerk, you know very little about the intricacies into which a capital "S" may go, or how the rats eat the stamps. A job is always annotated for the employee.

Certainly, teaching school introduces you to manifold works which could not be anticipated by looking in. In fact, when my friendly janitor once said that it must be very easy to teach the First Grade, I caught myself falling back on the popular phrase with some emotion — "There's more to it than you'd think." My most baffling problems

were just a little too complex to mention to my janitor.

"What instantly comes to your mind," says my college friend who is "taking" Psychology, "when I say the word 'ping-pong'?"

I tell him. By right of which I retaliate, "What instantly comes to your mind when I say the word 'sand-table'?"

"Oh, little paper pine trees," responds the student (who is also "taking" Education), — "and wigwams and canoes, and a real piece of glass for a pond."

All this comes to my mind, too, — with addenda. The addenda, however, come to my mind first: Spilling Sand, Sweeping up Sand, Trailing your fingers in Sand as you march past, and, if

you are *very* newly five years old, Throwing Sand. This is not because I am soured on the sand-table. I have merely learned that there is more *to* one than you would suspect from the outside of one, looking in. Sand-tables may mean pine trees, and they may mean pandemonium.

Throw several such freighted words into a mixed group, and the reactions are passionately interesting. If you say, "Muscular movement," "Interest and Attention," "Socialized Classes," or "Projects," you can sift out the school-teachers by their smile.

In fact, there is a very large group of noun substantives which mark, for an Elementary teacher, at least, the seasons of the year. Usually she has a top drawer full of these. Many a teacher

longs for the horse-chestnut-on-a-string season to appear, if only to finish up the season of the maple-key; — that large pale-green maple-key, which, by clever splitting of the central seed, may be made to stay on one's nose. My young friend Junior O'Brien once read to me "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," with a maple-key over each ear, one on his freckled nose, and two on his apple cheeks. I gave over my reading-lesson period to researches as to how his hard little cheeks could yield enough slack to accommodate a key; and before I was ready to ask Junior to remove his decorations, the force of gravity intervened.

The maple-key, I suppose, suggests eye-glasses. Certainly a bit of wire, twisted into spectacles, follows keys.

These may be very ornate in the upper grades, more nearly approaching the lorgnette, or even the opera-glass. It is a fascinating thing to see what a wire hairpin correctly treated will do to a young face. It lightens my day's load, this vision of grave childish eyes through the twisted rims, and that magnificent effort of will, contrary to nature, to obtain perfect immobility of the nose.

In company with the gross of wire spectacles in my drawer are numerous "snapping-bugs." These may be bought for one cent each, in the snapping-bug season, of the ice-cream man. They are double bugs of tin, which, if pinched in the proper spot, will yield a sharp click reminiscent of the old-fashioned stereopticon lecture. Snap-

ping-bugs may go far in "socializing" a First Grade, and in making friends with a newcomer at recess, but when they snap in school they give me an uneasy sense that my audience is in haste to have the picture changed. So I have six snapping-bugs.

I have five tumble-bugs. These are vivid green or purple gelatin capsules about an inch long, each housing a lead ball. Place the bug on an inclined plane, and it will promptly turn right side up, or the other side up, as long as the plane continues to incline. Since tumble-bugs are practically noiseless, their life is somewhat longer than that of their snapping cousins.

I have one sling-shot. It might be argued that First Graders are too young for sling-shots. So they are.

They all too often receive their own charge full in the eye. They much prefer their comfortable acorn pipes. These are pandemic in October, as are also balloons.

I once perceived Dominick, in the height of the balloon season, with a frankfurter balloon, a shape then new. The active part was at just that moment inert — a dried and crumpled wisp of rubber. But its tube was unmistakably going to be blown. Dominick will never know how much his teacher wished to see his balloon, properly inflated, swaying and glowing as only a green sausage balloon can glow. I was deterred by a misgiving as to whether this type of balloon collapsed quietly after its magnificent spectacle, or whether it was of that variety which

emits a peculiar penetrating whistle as it shrinks — an unmistakable sound, due to be placed accurately in her list of sounds by my teacher-friend next door, who does not approve of balloons in academic session. Dominick, however, wished more than I did to see his lighter-than-air craft in all its glory. I finally deposited it among the false noses and horse-chestnuts in my drawer.

I used to wonder why a teacher *wanted* marbles and walnuts, and pencil-sharpeners shaped like a rabbit. She does n't. She simply does not want to hear them dropping, dropping, ever dropping, like the pennies in Sabbath School. There is something thrilling to *any*body about a real agate. If it is about, you have to look at it. It is so perfectly round. Anything perfectly

round, or perfectly cylindrical, likes, as we learn in Kindergarten, to roll. It likes, upon occasion, to "rest"; but it does not like this nearly as well. It is not fair to a child to let him spend his time playing with an agate in school. Neither is it fair to him to destroy the beauty of an agate for him — the charm of its shape, or the marvel of its construction. A teacher should strike a medium so delicately and absolutely medium that the angels themselves pause lest they jar the weights.

But the most curious phenomenon which I have observed, one which could not possibly be anticipated by an outsider looking in, is the effect of my setting the clock. There are times when a perfectly innocent shuffling of thirty-four feet in the First Grade assumes

proportions far more important than Murder in the First Degree. Then it is that I set the clock. If it does not need setting, I set it forward first, and then back again. The clock is high on the wall, reached by the janitor (all too seldom) from a very high step-ladder. I set it from the floor. I take the yardstick and advance on the clock. It is a nice operation to push up the glass crystal with a pliant stick, haul down the minute-hand, and finally to close the door. The door must first be lifted into its proper position, and then hammered shut. Each bang of the yardstick sounds as if it would be followed certainly by showers of broken glass. I think that this uncertainty is what keeps my pupils' hearts fluttering and their feet still. Deathly silence al-

ways accompanies my setting of the clock. An imperceptible sound of relief, like a group-sigh, follows the click of the door in its catch. I can tiptoe back, on that sigh, to quiet industry.

It is true that children, with the best intentions, sometimes bring inappropriate busy-work to school. But teaching them has not dowered me with any disdain for my students. They are beneath me only in years. In fact, I raise my hat to some of them in spirit, as I teach them to raise theirs to me in truth. Here and there I calmly recognize a superior. I am constantly taking care that no youthful James Watt can say to me in later years, "You put out my first tea-kettle which boiled in school."

I suppose that Pauline will eventu-

ally be a gracious hostess, saying just the right thing to her guests and to her husband — charming every masculine acquaintance on sight. Even now, I find that she is engaged, provisionally, to James Henry Davis. Perhaps some day Adamoskow, with his long clever fingers and his dreamy eyes, and no head whatever for "number," will be charging me five dollars a seat to hear him play. His impresario can count the change for him.

And I know that James Henry Davis, at seventeen, will have the power to break hearts to the right of him, and hearts to the left of him, with the same dimple, the same wonderful pompadour, and the same lifted eyebrow that he now uses for the same purpose in Grade I. I know that he will out-dance

his dancing-master at his Junior Prom. I shall wonder, when I see him in his white gloves, how I ever dared to take his acorn pipe away. Therefore I take it away as innocuously as possible, and touch his soft pompadour, in passing, with a reverent hand.

TRIO IMPETUOSO

THE first steps of certain things are beautiful; the first flush of buds along a maple branch, for instance, or the first smooth launching of an Indian canoe. But the first steps of music are commonly not so. The first note of a young robin is a squawk. The first piercing note of a young violinist is not in tune with the music of any sphere.

Musicians learn to expect a certain amount of wear and tear in first attempts. Even the professional orchestra makes bad work of a new symphony the first time through. And in an amateur orchestra, where the players are of

various grades of proficiency, the playing of a new piece of music is a hazardous affair.

In our own orchestra, when we read a new piece of music for the first time, we usually decide to "try it once through without stopping." Come what will, we will meet it together. The great thing is to keep going. Sometimes we emerge from this enterprise with all bows flying and everybody triumphantly prolonging the same last note. At other times we come out at the finish one by one, each man for himself, like the singers in an old-fashioned round-song rendering of "Three Blind Mice."

To enjoy playing in an orchestra like ours, the musician should have a great soul and a rugged nervous system. He

should not be too proud to play his best on music that is too easy for him, and he should not be afraid to try music that is too hard. Music within the easy reach of every member of an amateur orchestra is scarce. The first time through, there is usually somebody who has to skirmish anxiously along, experimenting softly to himself when he loses his place, and coming out strong when he finds it again. From among the many desirable notes in a rapid passage, he chooses as many as he can hit in the time allowed, playing selected grace-notes here and there, and skipping the rest. We cannot all have everything.

Most amateurs call this process "vamping the part." This, and the clever deed known as "cueing in" pas-

sages supposed to be played by instruments that we lack, are our chief offences against the law.

There are proud spirits in the world who refuse to have anything to do with either of these sins. When they come to a passage that is not well within their reach, they lay down the fiddle and the bow, and sit back tolerantly while the rest go on without them. Their motto is the one made famous by a certain publishing house: *Tout bien ou rien.* That is a fine watchword for a publisher, but fatal in a scrub orchestra. There, it is likely to mean that "tout" must go "bien," or you resign.

Nobody has ever resigned from our orchestra. We are called a Trio, because our minimum is three. But, in actual fact, we rarely play with less

than seven performers. Whenever we are about to play in public, we reënforce ourselves with additional instruments, beginning with a favorite extra violin. If we are to play in the evening, we can count on a viola and a clarinet, played respectively by the senior and the junior partner of a hardware firm: Mr. Bronson and Mr. Billings, of Bronson and Billings. If we are to play on Sunday, we are sure of a double-bass. And on state occasions, we are joined by an attorney-at-law who plays the piccolo. People who invite us to play always request music by Our Trio, and then inquire delicately how many of us there will be.

A trio of this kind is sure to be in demand. In making our way to the place where we are to play, we have

learned to go in relays through the streets. This is not because we are ashamed to be seen carrying the badge of our talent through the town, but because if we all go together there is a discussion about who shall carry what instruments. Barbara, our 'cellist, is the storm-centre of these broils. The 'cello, like some people, has the misfortune to look a great deal heavier than it really is. No gentleman likes to let a lady carry one.

"Really, it's as light as a feather," says Barbara, swinging it easily alongside.

"But," reasons the viola earnestly, "think how it looks."

To avoid all friction, Barbara goes ahead with the gentleman who plays the bass-viol. Together they present

a striking aspect to the passer-by, but they have peace and mutual understanding in their hearts. Nobody could expect a gentleman, however gallant, to carry both a 'cello and a double-bass.

The rest of us follow along at a safe distance, and arrive at becoming intervals at the place where we are to play.

For convenience in talking among ourselves, we have divided our performances into three classes: the platform performance, the semi-screened, and the screened. Our semi-screened programmes are those where we are partly hidden from view, in choir-lofts, conservatories, verandas, and anterooms. The screened are those that take place behind palms. Of all these sorts, we vastly prefer the screened.

Each of us has a special reason for

this preference. Mr. Bronson, the viola, prefers it because, screened, he is allowed to beat time with his foot. There is something very contented-looking about the tilt of his long shoe, thrust out informally amidst the shrubbery — the toe rising and falling in exact rhythm with the music, now legato, now appassionato, our perfect metronome. Such happiness is contagious.

Barbara likes to be screened because then she can dig a tiny hole in the floor for the end-pin of the 'cello, and stick the pin into it once for all, while she plays. The vogue of the waxed hardwood floor is a great trial to 'cellists. It is upsetting to feel your great instrument skidding out from under you suddenly, with a jerk that you can

neither foresee nor control. When we go to places where the device of boring a hole in the floor may not be well received, Barbara takes along a neat strip of stair-carpet, anchors it at one end with her chair and at the other with her music-stand, and sits on it firmly, much as the ancient Roman used to camp upon a square of tessellated pavement brought with him from Rome.

Mr. Billings, the clarinet, likes the screened performance because his wife has told him that he has a mannerism of arching his eyebrows when he plays. In playing a wind-instrument, the eyebrows are a great help. He can arch them all he likes, behind the palms.

The rest of us enjoy the sense of cosy safety that comes when we arrange

our racks, distribute the parts, and settle down with our backs to the foliage for an evening of music, out of sight. We can play old favorites, far too tattered to appear on a printed programme; new things not sufficiently rehearsed; extracts from compositions that we cannot play beyond a certain point; and, best of all, those beloved collections of what Mr. Robert Haven Schauffler used to call "derangements." All these things, barred by the platform artist, we play blissfully, behind the potted plants.

Since everybody outside our leafy covert is talking, we are free, not only from criticism, but also from the obligation of acknowledging applause. All the little niceties of platform procedure — bowings, exits, dealing with

encores — are out of the question. Since we play continuously, there is no chance for encores.

There has been one exception to this rule. One night at a Saint Patrick's Day banquet, Our Trio was out in full force. Even the piccolo was with us. Our corner was carefully walled in with heavy burlap screens, because this was a business-men's supper, and no ladies were supposed to be present. We had brought along a sheaf of Irish music in honor of the day, and we played it unexpectedly after a series of other things. As we finished one of the appealing Irish airs, the applause broke out all over the hall in a genuine encore. We listened, electrified, laying an ear to the cracks. Barbara, who thinks that we are altogether too easily set up by the

plaudits of the crowd, stood up, 'cello at an angle, and made a series of elaborate bows for our benefit behind the screen. The viola sprang to his feet and joined her, and they were bowing and scraping hand in hand like Farrar and Caruso, when the front screen was thrown suddenly wide open by the toastmaster who had been sent to request an encore, and no less than forty gentlemen looked in. Since that time, we have not felt too sheltered, even with burlap screens.

The question of applause, so nearly negligible in the screened performance, is a matter of the greatest moment on the platform. The process of responding to it is complicated by numbers. A solo artist can step in easily, bow, and step out again. But it takes too long

for a trio of eight or more to step in, bow, and step out. We have to wait behind the scenes for a real encore.

We are highly gratified at a chance to play our encores, of which we carry a supply. The only hitch is the little matter of deciding just what an encore is. The viola thinks that an encore consists of applause going in waves — starting to die out and reviving again in gusts of hearty clapping. Two such gusts, he says, should comprise an encore. But our pianist thinks that we should wait until the clapping stops entirely, and that, if it then bursts out afresh, it shall be esteemed an encore.

One evening the encore was by every standard unmistakable. Our mother was at the piano that night, and, supposing that we were ready, led the way

in. The rest of us, absorbed in giving out the parts of the music, did not see her go. We waited, wondering where she was. Tempests of amused applause meanwhile surged up around our lonely accompanist stranded in the hall. We heard the thundering, and scattered in frantic search. One of us could have played the piano part, but the music for that had disappeared as well as the musician. The double-bass chanced upon the janitor's little boy in the corridor, and asked him if he knew where our accompanist could be.

"Why, yes! Can't you hear 'em clap?" said the boy in surprise. "She's went in."

I have heard that there are sensitive people who are jarred upon by applause, people who hold the perfect-

tribute theory: they think that the audience, out of respect to the artist, ought to remain reverently silent after each number. I cannot answer for the great artist, but I know that our trio does not feel that way about it. We like applause. Silence is a mysterious thing. From behind the stage how are you to tell a reverent hush from a shocked one? The trained ear can instantly classify applause; but silence, however reverent, does not carry well behind the scenes. We like a little something after each number to cheer us on.

We do know, however, that in a small private audience there is a sense of strain if the listeners feel obliged to make a demonstration after each selection. Clapping seems affected in a

group of three or four, and the business of thinking up well-selected remarks is a serious matter. Knowing this, we always relieve our drawing-room audiences of embarrassment by making the remarks ourselves. The moment the last lingering whisper has completely died away from the strings, we turn as one man and begin to compliment the music. "We like that ending better than any other part of the whole thing," we say appreciatively. This lifts a load of anxiety from the minds of our hearers, and serves to break the hush.

The question of playing to guests in our own home is the subject on which our family *ensemble* most nearly came to mutiny. Our father had a way, contrary to orders, of suggesting a little music when we had visitors. The rest

of us objected to this, especially if the guests were people who did not play. Once, when an evening of hospitality to strangers was in store, our mother was giving us all our final instructions. She turned to our father last of all.

"Endicott," she began impressively, "this evening you must n't say the word 'music' unless somebody else suggests it. If they want us to play, they will ask us."

Our father, a little grieved to think that any one should worry lest he do so strange a thing, promised to comply.

But that evening, finding the guests more and more congenial in the midst of firelight conversation, he turned to them cordially and said, "I know that this is just the time when you would enjoy a little music, but I have been

told that I must not say the word unless you suggest it first."

The guests, highly diverted, rose to the occasion and begged prettily. They said that they had been starving for some music all along. When visitors who do not really care for music have once been launched on the process of asking for it, the kindest thing to do is to play promptly something brief and sweet and trailing — some *Abendlied* or *Albumblatt*, for instance, and have it over. In the presence of guests, such family crises must be tided over with neat persiflage. It was only after the company had gone that the mutiny took place.

But there is one kind of audience that we like the best of all. Sometimes of an early summer evening, when our

whole orchestra has gathered to rehearse for a performance that we have in store, the relatives and friends of the players ask to be allowed to come and listen. We arrange the hammock and steamer-chairs in a screened corner outside the house, and there our listeners — perhaps the sister of the bass-viol, the business partner of the piccolo, and a neighbor or two — settle themselves comfortably under the windows. Then we play, interrupted only by an occasional shout from outside, when somebody requests an encore, or asks what that last thing was. Our steamer-chair audience has often begged us to announce the composer and the name of each selection as we go along, and we usually appoint somebody to do this, megaphoning the titles through the

window. But before we have gone very far, we forget our audience. They lie there neglected, scattered on the lawn. The dew falls around them, the shadows gather over them, and they give up the attempt to attract our notice. We are rehearsing now, not performing, and our blood is up.

Sometimes we have a strong-minded guest who refuses to be treated in this way. He declines the steamer-chair, with steamer-rug and cushion, preferring to sit against the wall in a cramped corner of the room where we are playing. We assure him that the music sounds better from a distance, but he begs to be allowed to stay. He says that he likes to watch as well as listen. This does not disturb us; we are rather flattered if the truth were known. In

fact, we know a little how he feels. There is a dramatic and pictorial value in the humblest orchestra, no matter how densely you populate your music-room. Usually the guest who enjoys this sight is a person who would like to play if he knew how — one who can join in the excitement when things are going well.

Like all amateurs, we do become excited. And when we are excited, we tend to play faster and faster, and louder and louder, unless something holds us up. "Pianissimo!" shouts the double-bass, fortissimo. Thus exhorted, we settle down just as earnestly, but with more attention to the waymarks and the phrasings of the score.

Probably it is at these moments that we do our very best. The bass-viol standing by the fireplace, his genial face

unsmiling now, intent, takes the rich low harmony with great sweeps of his practised bow. Barbara, over against the music-cabinet, plays smoothly on, her dark old 'cello planted firmly, the shadow of her hair across its great brown pegs. Mr. Billings, with pointed eyebrows arching steeply, pipes and carols above us like a lark. And through it all the vibrant foot of Mr. Bronson faithfully beats time.

"Why don't you get together and play like this often?" inquires the sister of the bass-viol, when the audience at last, with arms full of steamer-rugs and cushions, comes trailing in.

The piccolo, passing sandwiches, looks up with hearty response. "Yes, why can't we?" he asks. "After the reception, let's try to keep it up."

The rest of us, fastening the covers around our instruments, give enthusiastic consent. "Every other Monday, let's meet without fail," we say. But in our hearts we know that we shall not. We shall all be busy — all sorts of things will happen to prevent — and the weeks will fly. Yet we know that sooner or later our trio will meet again — probably for a desperate rehearsal some months hence, just in time for the next event where we are asked to play.

THE RETURN OF A, B, C

HAT is, I used to hope that they were returning. My neighbor's small son, Tony, aged six, needed them. He needed them to learn to read with. This was before I had any first-hand evidence about modern school methods. I saw school only through Tony.

Tony was able to read, "over to school," such excerpts as the following: "The gingerbreadboy went clickety-clack down the road." "Sail far, sail far, o'er the fabulous main!" "Consider, goat, consider!" "You have made a mistake, Mr. Alligator." Just why, I reflected, should "Mr. Alligator"

and "fabulous" be introduced to a pleasant child like Tony, who had not as yet been allowed to meet "cat," "dog," "hen," "red," "boy," "bad," and a great many other creatures really necessary to a little boy's existence?

His mother knew that Tony was not learning to read very fast. She argued with me a little on principle. She said that James Whitcomb Riley wrote "fabulous." I reminded her in a neighborly way that Mr. Milton wrote the "Areopagitica," thought by some to be a good sort, but that, until Tony knew his letters, the "Areopagitica" would be almost wasted on him. I would have stepped in at this point myself and ponied him a bit, for pure love, had it not been for the fact that I hated to have him get a sensible A, B, or C

mixed up with such corrupting associates as a considering goat or a mistaken alligator. And he would certainly have mixed them up. He would never have been able in this world to decide in his little mind what relation "consider" had to A,B,C. And he would have been quite excusable.

I began to think that his mother was too optimistic. She was trying to console herself by the fact that, if she should die, Tony could at least order gingerbread off a menu card. But could he? The sad fact that my neighbor overlooked was that he did n't know "gingerbread" when he saw it, but just "gingerbread*boy*"! Perhaps even at that, Tony might not have starved, for even gingerbread*boys* are edible, if Tony really could have recog-

nized that. But he could n't. Not outside the confines of his "reading-book" — Heaven save the mark! A modern word-fiend tried to explain to me here, that, after having learned "gingerbreadboy," a child comes naturally by three words (and even four if they allowed "gin" in the school curriculum) — namely, "ginger," "bread," and "boy." But Tony did n't. I tried him. He looked upon "ginger" as an entire stranger, interesting in form, perhaps, but still foreign. Something, I was convinced, was wrong. And I attributed this state to the fact that Tony did n't know A, B, and C.

Just as I reached the high noon of this conviction, I was drawn by the most curious of circumstances into the business of teaching little children to

read. I held the novel position of being besought to bring all my heresies and all my notions, and join the influenza-thinned ranks of the teaching profession. The Board of Education said that it was desperate. It must have been.

I suppose that no other power on earth could have converted me so quickly to the decried method, as my being forced, out of loyalty to my employers, to support it. I was plunged on the first day — not into "clickety-clack," but "slippety-slip." It was my first object lesson to hear the laughter of many little children, as the small gray cat swallowed slippety-slip in rapid succession the white goose, the cinnamon bear, the great, big pig, and others which have "slippety-slipped" my mind

just now. It was easy to teach them which fantastic word said "slippety-slip." It was very hard to teach them which plain-faced word said "and." I was happy to find many fine old words ranging themselves in the same category as "slippety-slip." "Goose" is intrinsically easier to learn than "duck"; "red" is a bagatelle beside "blue." But the easiest word of all is "slippety-slip."

I took notes of phenomena like these, for use later in dealing with critics who theorized as I had theorized on the day previous. I was not quite ready with any solution on this first day when a visiting mother assured me that she, when a girl, was wont to read much better when her book was open before her. Her son, on the contrary, read bet-

ter, she told me, and with more interpretation and fine feeling, without his book. "People think," said my visitor, "that when a child has his book open and says aloud the words printed on that page, that he is reading. He may be," she added mildly, "and then again, of course, he may n't."

I determined that, when this logical lady should come again, her son should be reading. So I taught him to read. I taught him via the method I had disparaged; via "Mrs. Teapot," "Goosey-Poosey-Loosey," and the goat that would not go home, without once mentioning the names of A, B, or C. This boy is in the third grade now, skimming the "Literary Digest" for material for his oral language.

The second step in my conversion

occurred when one of the overworked teachers showed me hastily how to teach Phonics. She drew a flight of stairs on the blackboard, and on each step she placed a letter of the alphabet. I did not find "A" among them, but I discerned both B and C. To my surprise, the little children knew these, but they called them (as nearly as the printed page can convey the sound) *buh* and *kuh.* They called "R" *err,* and "H" they called *huh.*

When I reached home, I looked up a few letters in the Dictionary, and received new light. Of what use is it, after all, to know that "W" is called "Double-you," unless you know first the sound for which it stands? The Dictionary, in fact, explains that the proper sound of this letter is really a

"half u" instead of a "double u." Certainly "W" is a more helpful tool to a child when he has been taught to pucker up his lips like the howling wind when he sees this letter coming, than when he has been taught to get set for a "d" sound which is not there. Why confuse a child's mind at first with what a letter is arbitrarily called by some one else? Surely it is more sensible to show him what noise to make when he sees it.

But I found that some of the children did not connect the delightful game of the blackboard stairs with their reading at all. Tony was among this number. Right here I was electrified to find out the real trouble with Tony. I found that it had not occurred to him that the letter "g," at

the beginning of the word "good," for instance, could have any part in distinguishing this word from the Little Red Hen. I found also that many of the children were recognizing "good-day to you" wholly by the quaint little dash in the middle of "good-day." They shouted heartily "good-day to you" whenever I showed them any word containing a hyphen.

To remedy this difficulty, I abstracted Phonics bodily from my afternoon session, and inserted it directly before the reading period in the morning. In fact, I allowed a few Phonics to spill over into Reading, and commenced to read a little before the children were quite finished with the staircase. I can say that the greatest triumphal moment of my life was when an

entire class saw, independently and suddenly and of themselves, that "ice-cream" could not possibly be "good-day to you." And the fact that the children now knew these apart by a phonetic tool did not prevent them from saying "good-day to you" just as cordially and just as fast as before. Moreover, they had not compelled the school system to wait for them to spell out the words letter by letter.

This is the only stage in a modern phrase-and-sentence method which contains a pitfall. If this is solidly bridged, most children will learn to read more understandingly than we used to. They will read twice as well, and three times as fast.

At the end of the school year, after Tony had read nineteen books, I did

throw in the alphabet itself as a classic. We even sang it to the good old-fashioned tune.

Tony will use A, B, and C, in the Second Grade to spell with, and in the Fourth Grade to look up words in the Dictionary with; but he did not need them, after all, in the First Grade, to learn to read with.

UNDERSTANDING THE HEALTHY

THE healthy in all centuries have misunderstood the sick. In the days when sickness was supposed to be the result of possession by devils, the healthy gathered around the invalid, beating upon drums. When all disease was supposed to be the chastening of the Lord, they gathered at the bedside again, teaching repentance of sins. And in our own generation, they come again around the sufferer telling him to take his mind off himself.

I myself, being healthy, have never been the victim of that form of ministration. I have simply observed the effect

of it on others. And since there is no hope of converting the healthy from this habit, the next best thing is to explain the obscure workings of the healthy mind.

Of course, no two healthy people are quite alike, and general statements about any great composite type are dangerous. But no matter how divergent their styles, all up-to-date, unspoiled, healthy persons can be trusted to make certain stock remarks to or about the sick. The context may vary, but sooner or later the following phrases will crop up: "pulling yourself together"; "bracing up"; "standing a little real hardship"; "forgetting all about your aches and pains"; "people who never have *time* to be sick"; "people who are worse off than you are"; and, "taking your mind off yourself."

At any one of these cheery phrases, the spirited sick man feels his gorge begin to rise. He knows that if his gorge rises, so will his temperature. With a mighty effort he swallows his temper, and his temperature goes up anyway at the exertion. All this time he knows that his visitor meant well, and he despises himself for his irritation. He has no way of defending himself, for, if he should describe how ill he really is, would not that convict him of having his mind on himself, of craving sympathy, of "enjoying poor health"? Over and over the words of his visitor go ringing in his ears — words intended tactfully to stimulate recuperation. "It's fine to see you looking so well. All you need to do now is to get something to take up your mind. I know how hard it will be, for I have

been there myself, but circumstances were such that *I* just *had* to brace up. It would be the best thing in the world for you if you only had to rough it a little."

Any one of these remarks is guaranteed to leave the person who is really suffering in a very storm-beaten state of mind, unless by the luckiest chance he understands two basic facts about the healthy: first, our healthy imagination; second, our healthy ignorance.

The healthy imagination, in the first place, cannot bear to move in circles. Any novelist knows that a story must progress. If the action is dramatic, the final downfall or the final victory must follow swiftly upon the heels of conflict. The attention wanders if the story goes monotonously along in the style of "An-

other grasshopper came and brought another grain of corn. And then another grasshopper came and brought another grain of corn."

On the same principle, the general public gives intelligent understanding to the great dangerous diseases where there is a grand struggle of life and death, where the sufferer grows rapidly worse, reaches the crisis, hangs for a moment between time and eternity, and then either dies or gets well. Here is the stuff of contest, the essence of Greek drama: pity and fear, unity of action, and dignity of conflict. The imagination rises to it as to whirlwinds and the noise of waterspouts. But when it comes to the good friend who neither dies nor gets well, who begins to recover and succumbs again, travelling the mo-

notonous round of one ill after another, none of them fatal, — then the healthy imagination stops following the circles.

It is time by every calculation that our friend recovered. We hope that he will soon be well and strong. He hopes so, too, we admit broad-mindedly. But most of us fall into generalities at this point. We are not impatient *with* our friend; we are impatient for him. A delayed convalescence, we have heard, is usually the result of mismanagement somewhere; the wrong doctor, perhaps, a family inclined to spoil by kindness, or mind over matter imperfectly understood. Suppose our sick friend could get away from his anxious relatives, and be suddenly cast upon a desert island; would he not have to brace up and rattle down his own cocoanuts with a will?

We have known such cases — paralytics who got thrown overboard and nimbly swam ashore, rescuing women and children on their way. Our friend is not an extreme case like that, but, if he actually had to get to work, would he not forget all about his troubles, and suddenly find himself cured?

Once having put him into the class of needless suffering, we roll along merrily to the moment when we decide that it is time for us to speak. Let us speak tactfully, by all means. Let us auto-suggest as it were! Let those of us who are amateurs do what we can in a quiet way.

At this point, the healthy do three things. We diagnose, we prescribe, and we tell you to take your mind off yourself.

This is where the healthy ignorance comes in. When we are well, we think of the mind as a convenient tool; in Huxley's words, "a cool, clear, logic engine." We know that minor ailments of our own have vanished when we have vigorously taken our mind off our symptoms and gone to the movies. We are at our best, we know, when we have given our whole attention to something absorbing, quite outside ourselves; business, friendship, good works. We feel that our acquaintance will be the better for this valuable thought. We do not know that every other healthy person in town has also decided that it is time to pass on the same idea. Neither do we realize that the ability to do as we suggest is the sick person's idea of heaven.

Thinking thus masterfully of the mind, we speak glibly of doing things with it. We do not know how slippery and complex a thing the mind is when assailed by suffering. "Take off your mind." Take off your hat. We do not know what long hours every invalid spends driving his mind along on every pleasant topic under the sun, only to feel it skidding, skidding, from side to side, just as you feel yourself steering for the nearest tree when you begin to drive a car. And after all this effort, what has he been doing but putting his mind on his mind? Less exhausting to put it on the pain and be done with it. When we urge our friend not to steer for the tree, we feel that we are presenting him with a new idea.

Healthy ignorance, in the second

place, assumes that the mind of a sick person is more than normally susceptible to suggestion. We have heard that, if you say to a patient, "How thin you are," he will instantly feel thinner and thinner, will droop and wilt and brood morbidly upon his state. Very well, then. We go to visit our friend resolved to make no such unfortunate remark. We conceal our shock at the changed appearance of our friend, but we cannot help thinking about it. Every healthy person is a trifle taken aback when he sees anybody else laid low. The neat white corners of the counterpane lend an awe-inspiring geometrical effect; if the patient is a man, he looks subtly changed without his high collar; if the patient is a lady, she is transformed with her hair in braids. We know that

we must not cry, "How changed you are, Grandmother," lest we send the patient into a relapse. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways. If a comment on frail appearance would thus depress our friend, surely the contrary assurance ought to chirk him up in proportion. We therefore say blithely, "Well, you certainly do look fine!" Then later we perhaps repeat it, to make sure that auto-suggestion has a chance to set in.

Now, personally, if somebody told me that I looked well, I feel that I could manage to bear up. But in the sick-room, the remark seldom makes a hit. Nine chances out of ten the patient does not understand the healthy. He feels that we suspect him of rusticating in bed under false pretences. He does not

want to be ill, nor to look ill; but since he *is* ill, he would be sorry to have us think that he might as well be up and about. He does not know that we adopt the cheery note to avoid the fatal opposite, and to encourage him. He does not know how helpless we are, nor how sure of the susceptibility of the stricken mind.

All these traits of the healthy imagination and the healthy ignorance are magnified tenfold if the invalid's disorder is nervous. To the untutored layman, a nervous disorder means an imaginary disorder. What nervous wreck has not prayed to exchange his baffling torments for something showy and spectacular, like broken bones or Spotted Fever? The healthiest imagination can grasp a broken leg. The

healthiest ignorance can see that it should lie for a while in splints, and that we cannot help our friend by urging him, however tactfully, to forget all about his fracture and join us on a hike. But disordered nerves are different. Everybody admits that. We feel instantly competent to prescribe. We have read up on psychotherapy, in the magazines.

Having diagnosed the case, having prescribed remedies, we feel a trace of impatience if our friend seems not quite cured.

In addition to our eager way of giving advice, we who are healthy have also a way of confusing cause and effect. When our patient finally does succeed in building up his vitality to the point where he can resume his work, when

we see him going busily about the world again taking his share of hard knocks without flinching, then we say, "There! Did n't we say he'd be better the minute he had something to do?" We know nothing about the times when he hoped that he had recovered, attempted to take up work again, and succumbed. We see only the triumphant emerging of his renewed vitality. To us the cause is obvious, just what we had been prescribing all along. When he was idle, he was ill. Now that he is busy, he is well. Could anything be more logical? Therefore, when we find him working hard at his old profession, we smile indulgently upon him and we say, "That's right! It will do you good! *Now* you have something to take your mind off your — "

But I will not repeat it. Never in all my life shall I say that beautiful and grammatical phrase again. There is probably a good deal in it—how much, I, for one, have not the least idea. Probably there are invalids in the world who would be completely cured if they could be worried into hard work at all costs, "roughing it" with a vengeance. We stray perilously near the fields contested by experts when we come to that. The point is that the subject will always be a field for experts, and that never in the long history of suffering was very much accomplished by the well-meant exhortations of friends. As far back as Old Testament days, friends came to see a patient man, and reasoned at length with him. And he cried unto the Lord.

Nearly every invalid loves his friends. He cannot bear to have them misunderstand him. And yet, if he only understands *them* — if he understands the healthy as a class, with our healthy imaginations, our healthy ignorance, our superstitions, and all our simple ways, the most desolate Job in a friend-strewn world can afford to brandish his potsherd and take cheer. He will know the explanation of our kindly words, and their proper discount at the bank. And perhaps he may be able finally, with a prodigious effort of his will, to take them off his mind.

CARVING AT TABLE

ARVING at table is one of the most virile things that a man can do, and yet it usually has to be done according to feminine standards. It is a primitive art overlaid with a complex technique, a pioneer act in a dainty environment. For so masterful a deed with an edged tool, a man should be allowed the space and freedom of the Maine woods. Environed by the modern tablecloth, he must be not only masterful but cautious; not so much fearless as adroit.

The process tests not only the man himself, but also his relations with his wife. When a married couple feel

equally responsible for an act at which only one of them can officiate, they are tempted to exchange remarks. The most tactful wife yields now and then to the impulse to do a little coaching from the side-lines, and many husbands have been known to reply with a few well-chosen words about the knife. They sometimes carry on quite a little responsive service. This happens occasionally even when the husband is an artist at his work. The ideals of two artists will occasionally conflict. And even the model wife, who ignores the carving and engages the guests in conversation until the worst is over, will at times find herself clutching the tablecloth or holding her breath at the critical points — when the drum-stick is being detached from the second

joint, for instance, or when the knife hovers over the guest's portion of the steak. These two crises are the great moments for the man who carves.

In fact, you have not taken the complete measure of a man until you have seen him carve both steak and fowl. These two make totally different demands upon the worker. The chicken calls for a sense of structure, a versatile skill in manœuvring for position, and the delicate wrist of the violinist. But your true porterhouse calls for shrewd judgment and clear-cut decisions, with no halfway measures or reconsiderations at all. With the chicken, you can modify, slice, combine, arrange to best advantage on the plate. With the steak, you work in the flat and in one color; every stroke must count. There are

men who would rather parcel out the Balkans than map a steak.

Great artists in carving are of several classes: those who stand up to their work and those who remain seated; those who talk and those who do not. I recall one noble old aristocrat, with the eye of a connoisseur and the suavity of an Italian grandee, who stood above the great turkey that he had to carve and discoursed with us as follows, pronouncing every word with the dramatic vigor that I try to indicate by the spelling, and illustrating each remark with one deft motion of his knife; this was his monologue: "Now, we cut off his Legg. . . . Now, we take his Winng! . . . And now, — we *Slice* him."

To my mind, this conversation is about the only sort in which the suc-

cessful carver can afford to indulge. The nervous amateur thinks it necessary to keep up a run of wise comment on the topics of the day to show that he is at ease; or perhaps he does it as the magician talks when he puts the rabbits into his hat, to distract the spectators' attention from his minor tactics. But he might as well learn that he cannot distract us. The matter is too close to our hearts. It is natural to watch the carving intently, not necessarily with an eye to our own interests, but because for the moment the platter is the dramatic centre of the group. Action, especially in an affair demanding skill, irresistibly holds the eye. The well-bred guest chats along of one thing and another, but his eye strays absently toward the roast.

This is very hard upon the newly married husband. Spectators add immensely to his difficulties. Some years ago, one such bridegroom, now an experienced host and patriarch, was about to carve a chicken for his bride and her one guest. I was the guest, and at that time I held theories about the married state. While we were setting the table, I had mentioned a few of these, among them my belief that all little boys should be taught the rudiments of carving, so that when married they would know how to preside correctly at their own tables. My friend the bride agreed with me, and supported my views by anecdotes from real life. The anecdotes were about boys who had not been so trained. Meanwhile the bridegroom listened intently from his post on the

kitchen table. Young women are likely to forget that young men have feelings, especially if they have been trained by brothers who displayed none. We therefore went on at great length. Carving, we said, was not an instinct, but a craft.

As we sat at soup, the young husband became more and more uneasy, and when the chicken made its appearance he leaned back with beads of perspiration on his brow. "After all this," said he, "I hope nobody expects me to carve that chicken. I'll just pass it around, and you girls chip off what you like."

The central difficulty in carving, however, is found not so much in the actual chipping as in the tactful distribution of choice parts. This matter

is complicated by the fact that unselfish people will lie about their preferences, polite people will refuse to disclose them, and critical people expect you to remember them. Even the expert carver, therefore, looks with favor on those convenient meats that come naturally in individual units — croquettes, cutlets, chops, sausages; here the only difficulty is the choice between brown and not so brown, large and small. There is only the mathematical matter of making the food go around, and the man with the vaguest sense of proportion can count chops and divide by the number of guests.

But when the company is large, and the platter of steak just adequate, there really is cause for anxiety. Some carvers, under such circumstances, begin cau-

tiously, serving small helpings at first until they are sure they are safe, and then becoming gradually more lavish. Others begin recklessly, and have to retrench. A group of college students once made a study of this matter with data and statistics that would have adorned a doctor's degree. The object was to locate the seat at any table of fourteen where one could count on the most even diet, the golden mean between feast and famine, no matter which member of the faculty chanced to carve. There were many variables to be considered: some members of the faculty habitually carved with giant portions at first, and then dwindled suddenly; others varied from day to day, profiting at one meal by what they learned at the last. A few were expert

dividers by fourteen. The conclusion was reached after weeks of minute toil. Like all great investigators, these students were prepared to warrant their findings for all time. The best seat at a table of fourteen — the one where you can count on the least fluctuation and the largest security — in short, Whitman's Divine Average — is the fifth seat from the professor, left. Things in that position run, barring accidents, quite well. If caution was the slogan at the outset, the plentiful supply on the platter has by that time begun to tell upon the mind of the carver, and things are looking up. If the first helpings were extravagant, there has still not been quite time to feel the real pinch of want. Fifth seat from the professor, left.

Of course, fourteen is too large a number to divide by. When it comes to long division, brain-fag is bound to set in. Since those days, I am told, food in that college is sent in ready apportioned in advance.

We should miss something in our homes, however, if the art of carving should decline. There is a certain symbolic grace in the fatherly act of hewing away at a large roast, even if a man does not do it so very well. It is true that a great many pleasant gentlemen do not feel quite at home when dealing with a meat; they do not feel quite at their best. They carve tentatively, parcelling it out at random. Until they come to their own serving, they are vague. At that point, however, the most helpless amateur takes on cheer.

Watch him as he settles himself more comfortably, draws up the platter at a better angle, and selects the fragments of his choice. It is here that he does his best carving, not consciously, not at all selfishly, but because he now feels sure. He has something to go by. He knows what he wants.

After all, the task of carving at table is not an infallible test of man. Some of the most uncertain carvers in the world are great and good men, standing high in their professions and revered by a family who must nevertheless shiver for the fate of the table-linen when the sirloin steak comes on. But the fact remains that the man who can carve equitably, neatly, and with discrimination has nearly always a balanced brain and a reliable self-com-

mand. In an army test he would stand high. He is your genuine "officer material." And he is very scarce.

THE FEELING OF IRRITATION

HE feeling of irritation in its earliest form once overtook a little girl whose mother had enforced a wholesome bit of discipline. In a great state of wrath the little girl went to her room, got out a large sheet of paper, and ruled it heavily down the middle. Then she headed one column "People I Like," and crowded that half of the sheet with the names of all her acquaintances. The other half of the page she headed "People I Don't Like," and in that column listed one word only — "Mama." This done, she locked the grim document in her safe-deposit box, and hid the key.

That glowering deed was the very ritual of irritation. The feeling of irritation is not merely one of heat; it is a tall wave of violent dislike that goes mounting up our blood. When we have it, it feels permanent. Our friend is not what we thought he was — our family is not what it should be — our job is a failure — we have placed our affections in the wrong quarter. When young politicians have this feeling, they bolt the ticket; when young employees have it, they resign. The first time when young married people have it, they think that love is dead. If they have too much wealth and leisure, they fly apart and eventually get a decree. But in households where the budget does not cover alimony, they commonly stay together and see for

themselves how the wave of wrath goes down. The material inconveniences of resignations, abscondings, law-suits, and the like have been a great safeguard in many a career. Nothing in Barrie's plays is more subtle than the perfect moment when the young couple decide to postpone separation until the laundry comes home.

It is not necessary to be a "temperamental" person or a fire-eater of any sort in order to know how it feels to be irritated — and irritating. The gentlest folk are capable of both sensations. Any one who has seen a lovely lady deliberately stir up strife in the bosom of a genial story-teller, by correcting his facts for him and exposing his fictions, will remember the tones of restrained choler with which the merry tale pro-

gressed. Who has not remarked to a kind relative, "Well, if you know so much about it, why don't you tell it yourself?"

There is no ratio or proportion at all between the cause of irritation and the ensuing state of mind. In our moments of ferment we lose the faculty of discrimination. We hardly ever refer our exasperation to the trivial detail that brought it on. We feel that the detail is simply an indication of the great flaws in the whole situation. We have a crow to pluck, not only with our friend, but — to use the words of Quiller-Couch — with everything that appertains to that potentate.

For example, suppose that we are at loggerheads with a fellow-member of a public-welfare committee. He opposes

a measure that we endorse. He will not see reason. We therefore refer him to his class: he is a typical politician, a single-track mind, a combination of Mugwump and Boss Tweed. We ourselves, meanwhile, are a blend of Martin Luther, John Huss, and the prophet Isaiah, with tongs from the altar.

Or perhaps we are irritated with a colleague on a teaching-staff after the events of a varied day. Irrelevant matters have happened all the morning in amazing succession: an itinerant janitor filling inkwells; an inkwell turning turtle — blotters rushed to flood-sufferers; an electrician with tall step-ladder and scaling-irons to repair the electric clock; a fire-drill in examination period; one too many revolutions of the pencil-sharpener; one too many patriotic

"drives" involving the care of public moneys kept in a candy-box. And now our zealous academic friend calls an unexpected committee meeting to tabulate the results of intelligence-tests.

We are in no mood for intelligence-tests. We object. He persists. We take umbrage. He still calls the meeting. Then, up rears the wave of dislike and irritation, not at the details that have brought us to our crusty state — not dislike of ink and electricity and patriotism and intelligence — but dislike of our friend and of the Art of Teaching that he represents. The trouble with our friend, we decide, is his academic environment. He is over-educated — attenuated; a Brahmin. Nobody in touch with Real Life could be so thoroughly a mule and an opinion-

ist. Better get out of this ultra-civilized atmosphere before our own beautiful catholicity of thought is cramped, crippled, like his. At these moments we do not stop to remember that people are opinionated also on the island of Yap.

Most frequently of all, we apply our dudgeon to the kind of community in which we live. We are nettled at a bit of criticism that has reached our ears. Instantly we say cutting things about the narrow ways of a small community, with page-references to "Main Street" and the Five Towns. We forget that our friends in great cities might be quite as chatty. Margot Asquith lives and thrives in crowds.

We refer our irritation, also, to types. Any skirmish in a women's organization

is referred to women and their catty ways. Any Church or Red Cross breeze is an example of the captious temper of the godly. All friction between soldiers of different nations is a sign of Race Antagonism; the French are not what we had inferred from Lafayette.

In short, the whole history and literature of dissension shows that people have always tried to make their irritations prove something about certain types, or situations, or nations, or communities. Whereas the one thing that has been eternally proved is the fact that human beings are irritable.

If we accept that fact as a normal thing, we find ourselves ready for one more great truth. Violent irritation produced on small means is a deeply human thing, a delicately unbalanced

thing, something to reckon with, and something from which we eventually recover on certain ancient and well-recognized lines. When our feeling is at its height, we are ready to throw away anything, smash anything, burn all bridges. Nothing is too valuable to cast into the tall flame of our everlasting bonfire. This sounds exaggerated. Emotion remembered in tranquillity is a pallid thing, indeed. But it is hot enough at the time. The whole range of sensation and emotion may be travelled in an hour, at a pace incredible — a sort of round-trip survey of the soul.

The father of a large family sat in church at one end of a long pew. His wife sat at the other end of the pew, with a row of sons, daughters, and

guests ranged in the space between. Near the close of the sermon one morning, the father glanced down the line, gazed for a horrified moment at his eldest daughter, Kate, got out his pencil, wrote a few words on a scrap of paper, put the paper into his hat, and passed the hat down the line. As the hat went from hand to hand, each member of the family peered in, read the message, glanced at Kate, and began to shake as inconspicuously as is ever possible in an open pew. Kate, absorbed in the sermon, was startled by a nudge from her brother, who offered her the hat, with note enclosed. She looked in and read, "Tell Kate that her mouth is partly open."

Kate remembered that it must have been. The whole pew was quivering

with seven concentrated efforts at self-control.

Now, one would think that a moment like this would be jolly even for the cause of laughter in others. But it was not. Kate knew that they had been laughing before the note reached her, and she was hurt. If they loved her as she loved them, they would not want to laugh. She set her jaw like iron, and looked straight ahead. This started them all off again. With the instinct of a well-trained elder sister, she knew that if she wanted any peace she ought to turn and smile and nod cordially all down the row, as at a reception. But it was too late for that. She had taken the proud line, and she would follow it.

As her expression grew more austere, the boys grew more convulsed. Aloof

now, cut off from her kin entirely, she sat seething. Floods of scarlet anger drowned the sermon's end. The closing hymn was given out, but she declined the offered half of her brother's hymnal. "Tell Kate she can open it now," telegraphed one of the boys as the congregation began to sing. Here was Kate's chance to unbend and join the group and nod and smile again, but she was too far gone. She received the message with lifted eyebrows, and stood with cold pure profile averted until after the benediction. Then she turned away from her reeling family, and walked off in a white heat. Her anger was not at her father whose note caused the stir. She had no resentment toward him at all. If one's mouth is open, one would wish to be advised of the fact. Her feel-

ing was the mighty wrath of the person who has been laughed at before being told the joke. Unwilling to face her family, she went up to take dinner at her grandmother's house, that refuge for all broken hearts.

After dinner, Kate looked out of the window and saw her family coming up the drive. They filed into the house and gathered in a group. "I think," said one of the boys, "that in the cause of friendship we owe Kate an apology."

The grand manner of formal apology from one's relatives is the most disarming thing in the world. Friendly conversation flowed back into the normal at once. But it was years before it was quite safe for Kate to rest her chin on her hand in church.

Very often our most genuine irritations appear unreasonable to our friends. For instance, why should people object to being called by each other's names? Two brilliant young lawyers once developed animosity against each other because their names Stacey and Stanton were constantly interchanged. Children suffer from this sort of thing continually; grown people tend to confuse brothers and to call them by one another's names promiscuously. We may love our brother tenderly, and yet not like to be confounded with him. Even parents sometimes make slips. The smallest boy in a lively family had a mother who used to call the roll of all her children's names, absent-mindedly, before she hit upon the right one. Consequently, the small-

est boy learned to respond to the names George, Alice, Christine, and Amos. But the thing had happened to him once too often. One morning he came down to breakfast with a large square of cardboard pinned to his bosom; and on the placard in large letters was printed the word "Henry." Rather go through life with a tag around his neck than be called Alice any more.

All these capricious facts about irritability rather explode the old adage that it takes two to make a quarrel. If we are really on the rampage, the other person may be a perfect pacifist and still call down our ire. We can make the hot-foot excursion to the heights of madness, for instance, when a friend with whom we are arguing whistles

softly away to himself while we talk. Even worse is the person who sings a gay little aria after we are through. In the presence of such people, we feel like the college girl who became annoyed with her room-mate, and, reflecting prudently upon the inconveniences of open war, rushed out of the room and down the stairs to relieve her feelings by slamming the front door. She tore open the great door with violent hands, braced it wide, and flung it together with all her might. But there was no crash. It was the kind of door that shuts with an air-valve, and it closed gradually, tranquilly, like velvet; a perfect lady of a door. People who sing and hum and whistle softly to themselves while we rage, are like that door.

Knowing that human beings are oc-

casionally irritable, that they can recover from their irritation, and that we can also recover from ours, why is it that we ever hold resentment long? Some people, like soap-stones, hold their heat longer than others; but the mildest of us, even after we have quite cooled off, sometimes find ourselves warming up intermittently at the mere memory of the fray. We are like the old lady who said that she could forgive and forget, but she could n't help thinking about it. We love our friend as much as ever, but one or two of the things he said to us do stay in mind. The dumb animals have an immense advantage over us in this regard. They may be able to communicate, but their language has presumably fewer descriptive adjectives than ours. Words

spoken in the height of irritation are easily memorized. They have an epigrammatic swing, and a racy Anglo-Saxon flavor all their own. Unless we are ready to discount them entirely, they come into our minds in our pleasantest moods, checking our impulses of affection, and stiffening our cordial ways.

On this account, the very proud and the very young sometimes let a passing rancor estrange a friend. When we are young, and fresh from much novel-reading, we are likely to think of love as a frail and perishable treasure — something like a rare vase, delicate, and perfect as it stands. One crash destroys it forever. But love that involves the years is not a frail and finished crystal. It is a growing thing. It is not even a

simple growing thing, like a tree. A really durable friendship is a varied homelike country full of growing things. We cannot destroy it and throw it away. We can even have a crackling bonfire there without burning up the world. Fire is dangerous, but not final.

Of course, it is in our power to let a single conflagration spoil all our love, if we burn the field all over and sow it with salt, and refuse to go there ever again. But after the fires have gone down on the waste tract, the stars wheel over and the quiet moon comes out — and forever afterwards we have to skirt hastily around that territory in our thought. It is still there, the place that once was home.

Perhaps it is trifling and perverse to be harking back to nature and to child-

hood for parables. But sometimes there is reassurance in the simplest things. The real war-god in our own family was Geoffrey, and Barbara was his prophet. Many a doughty battle they waged when they both happened to be in the mood. Whenever Barbara wanted a little peace, she used to take her dolls to the attic, saying to our mother as she went, "K. G." This meant, "Keep Geoffrey." But one time Barbara was very ill. Geoffrey was afraid that she was going to die, and showered her with attentions assiduously. He even gathered flowers for her every day. The trained nurse was much impressed. One afternoon, when the crisis was passed, the nurse told Geoffrey that she thought that he was very sweet, indeed, to his little sick sister. Geoffrey was

squatting on the arm of the sofa, watching Barbara with speculative eye. He considered this new light on his character for a moment, and then remarked, "Well, you just wait until she gets her strength."

We live in cantankerous days. Anybody who has enough energy to do anything particular in the world has more or less difficulty in getting on with people. Unless he chooses to take his dolls to the attic, he is in for occasional criticisms, laughter, interruptions, and the experience of being called by names that are not his own. The world sends flowers to the dying, but not to people when they get their strength. It is the very rare person, indeed, who goes through life with nothing to ruffle him at all.

In moments of irritation at all this, we unconsciously divide the world into two columns: people who agree with us and people who do not; "People I Like," and "People I Don't Like." Instinctively we make the lists, and file them away. If we could lay hands on the ghostly files of twenty years and scan them through, we should find that the black-lists were not a catalogue of permanent and bitter hatreds, but a sort of Friendship Calendar. Many of our collisions, after all, were with the people to whom we came most near.

Almost every one wants to be easy to get along with. Some of us find it hard. In those discouraging moments when we have proved obnoxious to our friends, we are inclined to feel that a policy of isolation would be the most

attractive thing in the world. But there are practical drawbacks even to isolation.

A blizzard had once drifted all the streets of our town. Our mother, with the true pioneering spirit, decided that she was going out. Our father was urging her to wait until the streets were cleared.

"Now, Endicott," said our mother reasonably, "the snow-plough has been down, and there 's a path."

"But," persisted Father, "the wind has drifted it all in again." He paused while she put on her hat, and then he added earnestly, "You don't know how windy and drifted it really is. I just saw Mrs. Muldoon coming down the street, and she was going along single file, and making hard work of it too."

The family was immensely taken with the picture of Mrs. Muldoon's ample figure going downtown in single-file formation; but, in spite of the jeers of his audience, our father still insisted that Mrs. Muldoon *was* going single file, and that she *was* making hard work of it at that.

Now and then there is an extreme individualist who yearns to go through life absolutely unmolested, single file. He is impatient of collisions, and collisions certainly do occur through one's proximity to one's kind. But even the most arrant individualist can hardly go single file all by himself — not without making hard work of it, at least. And even if such a thing were possible it would not be a natural or kindly way of life. Our hardy race has always

valued the strength that comes from contacts of every sort and kind. We therefore keep up the hearty old custom of going through life in groups of families and associates and friends — even though, inadvertently, we sometimes do collide.

THE END

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